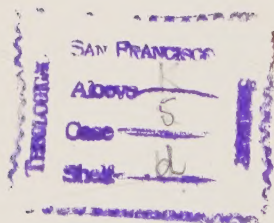


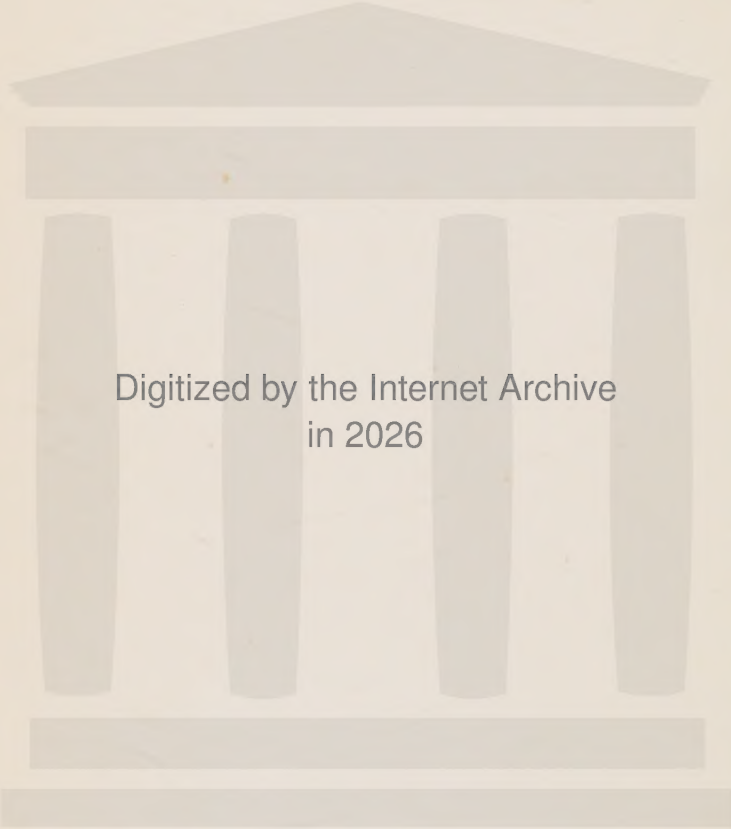
THE WAY

CHRIST AND EVOLUTION

A STUDY IN PLAY FORM
of the bearings of scientific discovery
on the interpretation of Christ;
a theory of life submitted as a basis
of organized human development

By PRINCESS LAZAROVICH-HREBELIANOVICH
With a Foreword by DAVID STARR JORDAN





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T H E W A Y

CHRIST AND EVOLUTION



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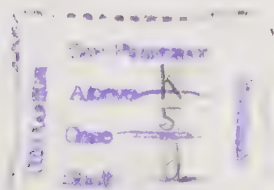
(born ELEANOR CALHOUN)

With a Foreword by

DAVID STARR JORDAN

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STANFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS
STANFORD UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA





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PRINCESS LAZAROVICH-HREBELIANOVICH
3600 Baychester Avenue, New York, N.Y.
Published September 1926

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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

TO MY SON
DOUSHAN LAZAROVICH-HREBELIANOVICH,
AND TO ALL WHO LABOR TO BRING FORTH!

FOREWORD

The Way is the expression of a woman who has worked in two fields: an art, and the political liberation of a people. She has thus had most intimate contacts with realities. She is deeply interested in the relations of advancing science to the ideals of Christianity. She cannot believe that knowledge and spiritual aspiration should be permanently antagonistic. She would have Science and Religion combine as running-mates in the development of humanity. To this end she appeals to Religion to cast aside her medieval impedimenta, her armor of ignorance and prejudice, accumulated in uncritical ages. On the other hand, she asks Science to lift her eyes from material forces and physical details toward the exalted region traversed by the spirit of Christ.

Toward this consummation, an appeal rather than a conventional drama, *The Way* is devoted. Zora, the inspired heroine of the play, says to her scientist-lover, Rurik, who questions the divinity of Christ: "Do we know what 'divine' is? Was Christ not the true first son of the Highest among us? As the first, having complete knowledge and control of Nature's energy, and faultless knowledge of human nature? The first perfect embodiment of truth in every relation—of helpfulness, love, suffering to the uttermost for the highest?—God's presence fills him before our eyes!"

The author lays much stress on the truth that humanity cannot find itself through violence or through compulsion. The suppression or extermination of the weak and wicked, the grandiose scheme of

the almost omnipotent Rurik, was sure to end in failure; for growth comes with freedom, and no human being is granted the power of final judgment on his fellows.

Life need not be made easier, but men and women can be better prepared for final mastery; the life and teachings of Jesus point to that mastery.

It is easy to recognize throughout that the words of Zora are expressions of the thought and feeling of the gifted author. To what extent these ideas and ideals are convincing and compelling, each reader may decide for himself.

DAVID STARR JORDAN

STANFORD UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA

August 1, 1926

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The conception embodied in this play is based on life-long studies of personality and character in connection with the findings of modern science, compared with what Christ taught, did, and was. The conclusion is, that the process of Evolution, whatever else it may be, is in some sense the conquest and practical appropriation of energy by the mind or spirit. This appropriation and subjection appears to occur in hierarchical procession or method of progression, in which, the more complex, more definite organizations of energy impress into their service the weaker and less sentient forms.

When, after countless millions of years, Nature had produced the human skull, it was short work to leap ahead to the well-rounded type of human being. With that arrived the age to go forward to a yet grander achievement, the unfolding of sublime potentialities in the creature.

It is postulated that still higher than the apex of the animal kingdom, the merely human, is another order in nature, toward which man is evolving and which he must enter here on earth. That is what he is doing here. This new order is to be attained through works of the understanding and the spirit. It brings with it the knowledge and mastery of all energy and the faculty to use the forces of nature creatively. It is the Creative Order.

Christ belonged to that order beyond present man. He was master of the energy in nature and able to play back and forth with its mutable forms. It is submitted that when the point in human develop-

ment was reached when man began to be capable of higher conceptions—when, as expressed by Christ, he was “*able to hear*”—Christ deliberately took the earth-flesh upon him, stepped down into earth-conditions to tell men of their nature and latent capacities and to show them how to achieve the full measure of life—life that is eternal because made up of eternal faculties and masteries.

His first word—as recorded by Mark and Matthew—and his continual cry was, “The time is fulfilled, the kingdom of the highest is now at hand! . . . the kingdom that is within you.” What can that mean, if not that an age of ages is completed, or has arrived at harvest-time, and that the day has come when human beings can enter a higher order of creation? This he called “the kingdom of God.” What is the function of that kingdom?—Creative-ness. Man has come to the evolutionary stage where he must step out from Nature’s nursery and its inexorable rules, the automatic fiats of earlier ages, and assume full responsibility, take upon him the perilous but glorious functions of being a free “fellow-laborer” as Christ said, with the Almighty Maker in the processes of his own farther advance. Man, too, must reach the mastery of all energy and its use for creative purposes. Will he not then, like Christ, be able to say literally of the body, “I have power to take it up and power to lay it down”?

At this present time when the whole earth stands in peril of self-destruction, through the beginnings of the mastery of physical energy put into the hands of vast numbers of mankind who have not yet made corresponding conquest of the spirit and are deficient

in the understanding of life-values, is the hour not here for all those, the earth around, who are beginning to have seeing eyes and hearts that hear, to form definite means of co-operating for the study and intelligent forwarding and intensive acceleration of race evolution into that high order of vast, ever-enduring life of control of natural forces and the exercise of a creative faculty?

Let universities and all other places of learning, the homes, and all individuals "awake!"—as Christ called to them—"awake and arise from the dead!"; become conscious "fellow-laborers with the Creator" in his work here on earth.

Let us with free minds study to know that work; get free from the dominations or the lingering grip of lower, preceding ranks in nature; shake off the habits of the reptilian age and the age of inter-slaughter—escape from the tyranny of ages past and gone. Let our war be against the seeds of death in us. Let us make "the dead past bury its dead!"

Let us look at Christ, listen to him, and know ourselves; believe him when he tells us what power sleeps in even the lowliest of us to overcome evil and weakness, sickness of soul and body, all hindrance; the power to live on, with increasing consciousness of life, and to achieve works with enjoyment beyond any ever dreamed of before the coming of the Christ age—the dawn of the Creative Order.

ELEANOR CALHOUN LAZAROVICH-HREBELIANOVICH

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NEW YORK CITY, N.Y.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

A first reading of *The Way* was given before the Southern California Council on International Relations, at the Los Angeles City Club, Los Angeles, California, on June 11, 1925, by the author, Princess Lazarovich-Hrebelianovich, and Mr. H. Ellis Reed. It was sponsored by the following: *From the University of Southern California*—Dr. Rufus B. von Klein-Smid, President; Dr. Rockwell D. Hunt, Dean of the Graduate School; Dr. Ralph T. Flewelling, Head of the Department of Philosophy; Professor Albert B. Ulrey, Head of the Department of Biology; Dr. Emory S. Bogardus, Head of the Department of Sociology, and Professor Ray K. Immel, Dean of the School of Speech. *From the University of California, Southern Branch*—Dr. Ernest C. Moore, Director; Dr. Charles H. Rieber, Professor of Philosophy and Dean of the College of Letters and Science; Dr. Marvin L. Darsie, Dean of Teachers College; Dr. Frederic T. Blanchard, Chairman of English Department; Dr. Frank J. Klingberg, Chairman of Department of History, and Dr. Loye H. Miller, Professor of Biology.

CHARACTERS

LORD KIRKLAND.....A Specialist in Biochemistry
 THEODOR RURIK (Russian-American)
 A Specialist in Radioactivity and Structure of
 the Atom
 DR. BARROWS (American)
 A Specialist in Paleontology and Biology
 PROFESSOR POMACK (Levantine-American)
 A Professor of Electricity and Radioactivity
 ZORA CANMORE (Descendant of Canmore Kings of
 Scotland).....Actress
 BRAMPTONButler
 MAID
 POSTMAN
 A BISHOP
 A GAY LADY
 YOUNG MAN
 DR. AGNEW.....Physician
 ANTONELLIJanitor
 LENA (Antonelli's wife).....Housekeeper
 A NURSE
 A VALET
 A ROUGH WOMAN
 A POOR WOMAN
 A YOUNG BEGGAR
 CARABINERI.....Officers of the Law
 MAESTRO; GUIDO, Second Violin; }Musicians
 NALDO, Third Violin; HARPIST }

TIME

The Present

SCENES

London, The Riviera, Venice

PROLOGUE

PROLOGUE

SCENE: London

At rise of curtain—the scene is in midnight darkness. A flashlight reveals a long Council table around which are standing sixteen men, one at each end, seven on either side. Those of the upper row are seen full face; of the lower row, only the backs appear. The room is lost in shadow, only the men's faces and the top of the table being well-lighted. The attitudes of the men are expressive of tense concentration of spirit. Their right hands are outstretched toward the center of the table, where their finger-tips describe an ellipse in space. . . . They speak briefly, each in turn, as if pouring into a central spectral cauldron their essential force of thought and determination. It is supposed that most of them have already spoken. Barrows is speaking when the picture becomes visible.

BARROWS: Working under the Council and in co-operation with the Fellowships of Biology and Paleontology and their organizations in all lands, I, Alfred Barrows, consecrate to our common undertaking the whole knowledge, effort, and resource now at my command or that may become so through further research in these fields, revealing the nature and laws of physical life, or their indications as registered in fossil remains of ages past.

LORD KIRKLAND (*at lower end of table*): Working under the Council and in co-operation with all efforts of research in Biochemistry in all lands

and our organizations in this field, I, Earl of Kirkland, vow to our general venture the results of my entire efforts, resources, and any knowledge possessed by me or that may come to my ken through further discovery in this subject bearing on the origin, nature, or development of life.

POMACK: Working under the Council and in co-operation with all persons and bodies engaged in Electrical Research or development and their organizations in all countries, I, Morva Pomack, solemnly dedicate the entire results of my efforts, resources, and knowledge, present or which I may acquire, to our world-conquering scheme!

(At Pomack's last words the two men on either side of him sharply turn their heads toward him. Others flinch somewhat at his final expression. Answering their look, he says sotto voce with a half-laugh—disagreeable in tone): Well, it is a scheme, isn't it?—and with some power, too, I'll say, for one of us! *(While he throws in this aside, a man is showing a paper to Rurik at head of table.)*

RURIK: We have finally been able to enrol in all regions of the earth every one of the great departments of physical research, as well as those devoted to psychological, sociological, and economic investigation. These various fields of scientific endeavor have reaffirmed their self-consecration through their representatives here present. Further, by virtue of a power which you have vested in me, I have

enrolled in our membership several individuals whose identity must remain unknown.

Pledging myself with you anew, I, Theodor Rurik, confirm the contribution, to our joint task, of my whole effort, and of all that I have come to know or may learn, of the nature of energy and its relationships to human activity and advance. I am glad to use also in the interests of our common objective the vast financial resources which accident of birth has placed in my hands.

Before proceeding let us bring to mind the purpose of our efforts. (*All repeat after him, phrase by phrase*) : By organized and intensive application of scientific knowledge, method, and principle—to eliminate and ruthlessly eradicate from human existence—among all races and peoples—every vestige of conditions—that hinder or obstruct—the development of efficient life. (*Continues alone*) : These methods are to be continually tested and readjusted according to the progress of scientific discovery. (*They are resuming their seats as the scene sinks back into invisibility.*)

FIRST ACT

ACT I

SCENE: The Riviera

[*Distant Music. The Scene is the sun-flooded grounds of a white villa with lawns to the water's edge. The blue Mediterranean, with overhanging, ancient, gnarled olive trees, cedars, pines, palms, acacia, roses, orange and lemon trees, and a cypress or two by the wall L. Through this foliage show parts of the white villa, R., with its roofless porch or terrace, marble statues, and fountain. The whole effect is poetic and happy. Under the trees far up L., can be seen a table garlanded and with bowls of roses, amid which shine silver and cut glass glistening in the sun, wineglasses, fruit, and the remains of a high wedding cake. The positions of the seats and napkins indicate that persons have just risen from table. Brampton busy at table. Postman comes on from right, bending under load of letters. Brampton, tray in hand, comes to meet him, and indicates big hamper on terrace, already heaped with mail. Letters in several piles on large table, others on floor, some in a basket on table opened as if for attention.*]

BRAMPTON: Deposit them there, please, on top of those in the 'amper!

POSTMAN (*with accent of Marseilles*): Eh, bwen! Eef Madame reada all zees!

BRAMPTON: Quite so! It was bad enough before; but since announcement of 'er Hexellency's marriage they simply pour in from all over Europe.

POSTMAN: All ze world désire to present homage and make its vows at ze grande tragédienne!

BRAMPTON: Luckily, we're haff by airplane tonight to Venice. Of course I follow by train——

POSTMAN: Ze air as vell as ze ertz belonga to ze reesh! He isa ze man ze plou reesh in ze world—pas vrai?

BRAMPTON: I'm sure I cannot say. 'is Hexcellency is quite comfortable, I believe.

POSTMAN: And zis greata man of science—'e ees grand seigneur; eet ees, all ze same, good to 'ava some grand seigneurs left!

BRAMPTON: Quite so! According to our modern theories, grand hancestors are necessary; we need them to 'and down to us heducated brain-stuff, brain-cells trained to 'igh standards, *noblesse oblige*, 'and all that! Hin fact, our main hindustry hought to be the manufacture of proper hancestors; and,—hem!—means for their better distribution, so to speak!

POSTMAN: Ah, I see, bwen, zat monsieur ees also a greata man of science!

BRAMPTON (modestly): I dabble, sometimes—dabble a little!

POSTMAN: Eees eeta posseeble zat I obtain only von hit of ze eye at Madame in her veddang robe?

BRAMPTON: I fear not; 'er Hexcellency is changing for travel.

POSTMAN: Helas!—I 'afa mees it all!

BRAMPTON: If you can wait. One of the guests begged 'is Hexcellency for a little air-spin

while 'er Hexcellency is dressing. But the plane will soon be back——

POSTMAN: Un'appee—two zinks zata people ina zis world villa not wait for: vone ees ze photographie, and ze ozzer ees ze lettres!

BRAMPTON (*as postman is going, Brampton takes a banknote from his pocket and gives it to him*): 'er Hexcellency desires the Postman to remember her wedding-day.

POSTMAN: Ah—zat is bwen, Madame! Nevaire she forget ze ozzers! (*looks at denomination of note with astonishment*)—Eh, bwen!—I zink so! Vat eet ees to be a millionaire!—Eefa 'e cana pay hisse'f sometings lika zat! (*Wildly delighted.*) My leetles—vat you say—“keeds,” zey villa now 'afa zere bateau! Madame always lof ze “keeds”; un'appee, her own lettie vone die! Here bébé of M. le Capitaine zat vas killed in ze Var!

BRAMPTON: I think I must not discuss the late Captain, if you don't mind.

POSTMAN: Pardonnez-moi, Monsieur, I forget! Tell at Madame—son Excellence—all my tanks and respectful vows for her 'appiness! and ze leetle vones!—merci, monsieur! merci mille fois!

BRAMPTON (*grandly*): Not at all—not at all! Don't mention it. We're very 'appy!

[*Postman goes; Brampton carries tray into the house. From back enter Lord Kirkland, a splendid specimen of Anglo-Saxon, six feet or more, raw-boned, distinguished in appearance, about sixty years of age; Dr. Barrows, also a famous man of science,*

scholarly, exact, and somewhat acrid, not quite so aloof in manner as Kirkland; Professor Pomack, American of foreign origin, flat, rather short and stocky in build. He strews his speech with little laughs as if he were the best fellow in the world, the soul of optimism; somewhat clumsy and unrefined in gesture, but of seeming childlike innocence. A wide rift between his two front teeth increases that childlike impression. He is fifty, or more.]

LORD KIRKLAND: May I inquire, Professor, what the question is which you think we should put to Rurik before he starts?

POMACK (*sneering, then tapering off goodnaturedly*): First, let me ask you both one question: Does this sudden idyllic marriage charm you?

LORD KIRKLAND: That's Rurik's affair. I confess I was at first rather taken aback; Rurik hardly seemed a marrying man.

BARROWS: One's thoughts concerning him were concentrated on such a different matter.

POMACK: What if the whole thing—the whole tremendous plan—falls through on account of this?

LORD KIRKLAND (*unperturbed*): *Sic transit gloria mundi!*

POMACK: Yea truly, so perishes the glory of the world—for a woman—an actress, too! An anticlimax, after such transcendental ambition; all our plans for the conquest of the earth—

LORD KIRKLAND } : Conquest!—What are you talking
BARROWS } about?

POMACK (*from spiteful irony to mock earnestness*):
Well, if you will, scientific, universal redemption! I'm intuitive, you know; frankly, I see
"Human Salvage" as a shattered dream——

BARROWS: Come, Professor, not so bad as all that!

LORD KIRKLAND: His lady is herself highly intelligent.

POMACK: Yes! to catch the greatest fortune going!
She had to support the first one, it seems—
that fellow that was killed in the War——

BARROWS: Pardon me, Professor, but I fail to see
your drift——

POMACK: You admit she may come to know of our
scheme; who knows where that may lead!

LORD KIRKLAND: I can't quite share your anxiety, or
the uneasiness of our other friends on the
Board, at the announcement of Rurik's sudden
marriage.

BARROWS: This lady may prove a valuable ally. But
what dark looks, Professor Pomack!

POMACK: What— do I look gloomy?—(*laughs*)—
I'm in the shade. I must get out into the sun!
(*Starts across lawn, then quickly turns and
paces back again.*) I believe it's sound that
the appearance of an unknown element upsets
all former calculations?—Vulgarly said, "the
fat's in the fire" with this marriage.

BARROWS: Nonsense, Pomack, nonsense!

POMACK: The whole Board is sworn to secrecy.
Rurik should be asked to assure us that he will
not stretch any interpretation of his position to
the imparting of our plans to this—Delilah!

LORD KIRKLAND: Quite out of the question! We've no shadow of a right to make any such demand.

BARROWS: No justification for it!

POMACK: A word of warning would do no harm——

LORD KIRKLAND: I think we may take it that Rurik is as wide awake mentally as any of us, and he has as much at stake.

POMACK (*jeering*): Yes, but has he?

LORD KIRKLAND: It was his plan, after all. Without his genius, his vast resources, his engine of execution, his terrific discovery, the undertaking would be unrealizable—never would have existed.

BARROWS: Yet, if we and our fellows do our parts, we shall all share in the achievement—the glory.

LORD KIRKLAND: I heartily agree; our chief care must be to work in loyal co-operation with Rurik, following his direction. Besides, why question his discretion?

BARROWS: Yes, hasn't he guarded even from ourselves every inkling as to either the principle or the mechanism of application of this appalling energy?—even while he broke up a mountain with it before our very eyes!

POMACK: That's the hic! He alone holds this power—in his own hands, in his sole control! (*Slyly*)—Now if one of us could learn it—(*the two other men stare at him blankly; he continues, not noticing their movement, or cynically confident.*) He once employed me for a short time in one of his laboratories. That was some

years ago, not long before I took out my famous patents—those alchemizing patents, that transmuted me from dirt to gold—from a poor man into a rich one! (*Laughs softly to himself.*)—If I could only supplement certain points I chanced across then, I should be on the road to what would free us all from this man's domination; we could go ahead without him.

[*The others stiffen coldly.*]

LORD KIRKLAND: Pardon me, Professor Pomack—I fear I don't quite understand you——

BARROWS: I trust you are playing the game——

POMACK: Playing the game—playing the game!

What is the "game"?—You are! and I am!

Why should men of our standing be mere puppets? (*breaks into his cordial little laugh, becoming offensively familiar*)—Oh, Lord,

don't mind me, boys! I've not your cold blood. I get peeved sometimes. (*He continues to fling his words against their silence and cool wonder.*)—Don't be hard on me. I see things coming in advance—something of a prophet, you know; my mother was a gypsy—er—I mean—my nurse was a gypsy. (*They stare at him. He quits them abruptly; both men look after him in silence. He throws himself upon a seat for an instant, then rises and strolls off back of the villa. The two others watch him in silence, then turn to exchange glances signifying that a most disagreeable revelation has been made.*)

LORD KIRKLAND: I must say that his presence among us has always been most distasteful to me.

BARROWS: I wonder how he got in?

LORD KIRKLAND: It's amazing how such individuals manage to impose themselves; full of dross—full of dross!

BARROWS: God!—If such a man could snatch Rurik's power——

LORD KIRKLAND (*moodily*): That would be a catastrophe of the ages! (*In practical tone*)—Pomack is up to some devil's trick, as surely as we stand here.

BARROWS: We must warn our friend at the earliest possible moment.

[*They turn to go off back, but meet, coming on, several persons chattering gaily—a Bishop, a giddy widow or disentangled wife, with a very young man dangling about her, inveterate laziness and nonchalance in all his person. Pomack is among them, the gay lady making up to him, while he submits to her blandishments but is observant. The gay lady speaks with a merry little laugh, even when spiteful, is self-satisfied and pleased with life.*]

GAY LADY: Here we are, safely back!

[*Serving maid comes and speaks to Pomack still at back.*]

MAID: The aviator is here, sir.

POMACK: Very well! (*Maid goes.*) Excuse me a moment—I must speak with this man.—I wanted to welcome them!

GAY LADY: I'll come fetch you—Shall I? (*He nods to her smilingly and goes off at back.*)—It was lovely! We circled all around and looped Corsica!

YOUNG MAN: I don't mind flying as long as there is another fellow along to flop my wings for me!

GAY LADY: Well, if it's true that Heaven is populated by "do-nothings"—you'll get in!

YOUNG MAN: Do y' think I'd have to wag my own wings?

GAY LADY: You are! (*Laughing.*)

YOUNG MAN: D'you suppose this flying age is drilling us up for the angel business?

BISHOP: We shall have to get used to the idea of flying somehow—somewhere——

YOUNG MAN: Then, I suppose wings'll begin to sprout on us—eh, Dr. Barrows?

BARROWS (*smiling*): They'll never sprout before then, that's certain!

YOUNG MAN (*drawling*): I once spent the time of an afternoon nap wondering why you gentlemen who go about digging in the far past, hunting specimens all the way up from the monkey to us, take such an interminable name as "pal-e-on-tol-o-gists"!

BARROWS: Name apart, my dear young sir, no need of the remote past for the specimens you mention. We have them aplenty, the whole series—here and now!

GAY LADY (*to young man*): One for you!

YOUNG MAN: You don't think he meant——

BARROWS: The myriad ages and stages of the human race are all about us!

LORD KIRKLAND: Where did you leave Rurik?

GAY LADY: On his way up to see if Zora is ready.
Oh, do look!—What mountains of letters!
(*Gay Lady and Young Man go on porch.*)

YOUNG MAN: Such is fame!

GAY LADY: What it is to be a great actress—the rest of us nowhere!—Positively snowed under by congratulations—not “hidden under a bushel,” either—the publicity instinct!—(*picks up a letter from table and reads aloud, her expression amused in advance, expecting flattery*)—“Noble Lady!”—Ah!—“My children are starving” Oh!—(*drops it as if it were infected—takes another, holds it out for him to see; then others, smiles at each scornfully, letting it drop to floor, thrusting them aside into discard with her toe*)—Beggars!

YOUNG MAN: Awful bores—they’d precious better go to work!

GAY LADY: What I say is, “He who does not work shall not eat.”

YOUNG MAN: Not so sure I’d care to see that idea emphasized!—Where should we be——?

GAY LADY: Speak for yourself, pray!—As for me, I’m sure I’m at it, morning, noon, and night! Where’s my scarf?—Must have dropped it on alighting. Go look for it—there’s a dear! (*He goes off back.*) My dear Bishop, do come and look at these letters—you’ll be interested——

BISHOP (*entering porch*): But hardly surprised, I imagine—— (*She dumps letters into his hands, leaves him, and nabs Lord Kirkland.*)

GAY LADY: Oh Lord Kirkland, I hope you will subscribe to my club! It’s for teaching working

girls how to be efficient—how to turn out more work in less time, you know—

LORD KIRKLAND: Ah, here they are!

[All present exclaim in happy greeting to Rurik and Zora, who enter porch-terrace from house, dressed for air-travel, with breeches, air-hoods thrown back. She wears a cape of draping material which hangs in straight folds at back, rather long, one corner of which she later brings around across the front and tucks in her belt at the side.]

GAY LADY: Stunning!—I'll find the Professor.—He asked me to— (*Goes off.*)

[Bishop is on the terrace with the letters which the Gay Lady had thrust into his hands. He makes gesture to them as Zora and Rurik approach the table, she taking letters from him and glancing at the hamper. Sight of the heaps of letters changes their mood.]

ZORA: Overwhelming, isn't it!

BISHOP: Records of human failure—

RURIK: Of our failure—mine, yours!

BISHOP: I don't see that!

RURIK: These are the moans and whines of a defective world—the world we make!

BISHOP: Oh, well, in a way, I suppose—life as a whole is no stronger than its weakest point.

RURIK: We go on tamely multiplying this weakness, though each one of us helps pay the penalty for every crime committed.

ZORA: I do want comfort to go to as many of the poor dears as possible. But I can't even open all these!

BISHOP: You may count on me if I can be of service——

ZORA: Oh, more than any one else!—If you see to it I shall know that the right people are engaged to handle the matter.

[*Pomack enters quickly from the back with Gay Lady, brushes past Lord Kirkland and Dr. Barrows and finds his way up to Zora.*]

POMACK: Here at last!—My reverent homage, Madam, and best wishes! But what a loss to the stage—no one left to interpret the great rôles of Shakespeare and the Greeks. How could you turn your back on those crowds of worshippers?—First, bound in silence, like death—then unleashed hurricanes of fire. To throw human masses down under the very dust of one's feet—! How could you leave it? (*She merely smiles rather remotely, glancing toward Rurik. Pomack continues*)—Oh, he—is happy! But the rest of us only know that the most glorious star in the heavens now passes into obscurity—(*bowing to her*)—or—er—I should say (*inclining half-spitefully to Rurik*), is swallowed up in the great light of us all!

RURIK: You are egregious!—Professor Pomack, my dear, rather fancies himself as a jester——

POMACK: Jesters tell the truth—cryptically, maybe; no one but the king understands. You know you were kings—and more, in the past——

RURIK: I must say, Pomack——

POMACK (*cutting in*): —And you still rule, today, in our modern, more potent method——

RURIK: Ass!—What are you driving at?

POMACK (*to her*): It's literally true, Madam; I've been looking on Rurik as Emperor of the whole earth——

RURIK: Stop right here, Pomack! Your pleasantry is offensive!

POMACK (*rapidly, sharply, with double meaning*): The ruler has only one—sole—duty—unless, of course, he plays the deserter (*answering Rurik's glance*). Forgive the criminal—on your wedding day! (*bows to her*) Noble Lady!

[*Pomack gets quickly away, being taken in tow by the Gay Lady whose hand he kisses, passing on to L., where he forces Lord Kirkland and Barrows to step aside with him a moment in a word or two of determined conference.*]

ZORA (*to Rurik*): I don't like him.

RURIK: Underbred; likes to make himself mysterious and important—that's all.

GAY LADY (*after Pomack has passed on left*): Isn't he a wonderful man?

ZORA: Who?

GAY LADY: Professor Pomack—simply too wonderful! By the way, what was his great invention?

RURIK (*smiling*): Pomack!

GAY LADY: What—? Oh, you are! (*laughing*) —But they say he gets a half a million a year out of

it!—the other invention, I mean. Doesn't quite belong, I know; but I simply adore him!

POMACK (*sotto voce to Barrows and Kirkland*): Many lives as useful as hers will go under——

LORD KIRKLAND: Keep your head, Professor Pomack!

[*Gay Lady pivots to Pomack as the other two men leave him and join Rurik and Zora.*]

GAY LADY: Dear Professor Pomack, I want you to promise me to come to us at Newport!

[*They go up talking, he glancing back once or twice over his shoulder at Rurik's group. Young Man comes partly on at back dragging scarf, then off.*]

YOUNG MAN: Do come! There's a girl here going to do the tarantella! (*Music of tarantella heard.*)

[*Gay Lady pilots Pomack off with her, joining Young Man.*]

LORD KIRKLAND: Sorry to have to go before you take off, Rurik. But we can just make the Paris Express.

RURIK: Sorry to lose you! But you are quite right. We shall all be gone in another hour.

LORD KIRKLAND: God bless you, Rurik! Take care of yourself—may I say, of both yourselves!

BARROWS: Good luck! Keep in touch with Kirkland and myself.

ZORA: You can hardly guess how much I, personally, look forward to seeing both Lord Kirkland and yourself on our return to London. I want to know more about that four-toed horse!

BARROWS: The four-toed horse, Madam! How can that poor fossil have won your notice?

ZORA: What you tell about him makes him the hero of a thrilling romance of the ages. I have questions to ask.

BARROWS: Delighted to find you care for this subject!—"Old dry bones," most people call it (*shaking hands*). Until your return, then; (*to Rurik, low*) most intelligent!

LORD KIRKLAND: Bon voyage!—and all happiness, Madam, on the great journey you are beginning! (*Shakes hands with her and with the Bishop.*) My dear Bishop, you must come to us this autumn.

BISHOP: With the greatest pleasure! My compliments, pray, to her ladyship!

[*Zora is left with the Bishop over letters, while Rurik accompanies Lord Kirkland and Dr. Barrows up L. toward exit, which they reach near the end of the following conversation.*]

LORD KIRKLAND (*to Rurik*): Let us know at once on your return to London.

BARROWS: Kirkland and I have a particular reason for wanting to see you as soon as you get back——

RURIK: A particular reason?

LORD KIRKLAND: Rather. Meanwhile, a word of warning as to Professor Pomack——

RURIK: Not quite a gentleman, I know, but no real harm in him—bit of a barker at times.

BARROWS: Might be a biter, too.

RURIK: I know—snaps at the heels——

LORD KIRKLAND: Well, well, God be with you, friend!

BARROWS: A word to the wise——

RURIK: I'll bear in mind what you say, though trying to see through Pomack is like—peering into muddy water.

LORD KIRKLAND: How the devil did he ever manage—er—I mean how could you ever——

RURIK: Years ago he got 'round my father, who paid for his scientific education, and on his deathbed asked me to keep Pomack on. He's a career-maker, with a talent for exploiting all sorts of people—that's the man's type. One ought to be kind, I suppose. I feel forgiving today. (*Rurik bids them adieu at gate; they exit.*)

BISHOP (*calling across to Rurik as he returns after their exit*): Rurik, I never saw such avalanches of appeal—and I am somewhat blasé in such matters!

RURIK: The futility of philanthropy!

ZORA: The Bishop has a plea to make.

BISHOP: In view of these mountains of solicitation—I hardly see how I can fulfil my promise to the parish priest, here. He waylaid me this morning and petitioned me to——

RURIK: You shall have the contribution, Bishop! (*Both smile.*)—Funds for his poor?

BISHOP: No—er—no—er—the old shrine of Santa Rocca, here, requires repair. He's whipping up a fresh revival of the cult——

RURIK: How mouldy of magic and superstition—
in our day!

BISHOP: I'm not of his persuasion, myself; but I
suppose it's as well not to disturb the beliefs
of the masses——

RURIK: Best keep them like stagnant water, you
think!

BISHOP (*testily*): I'm not so sure they're any worse
off for that than our young men who come
from the science classes minus any faith at
all!

RURIK: Truth stripped of her old tatters is, per-
haps, a bit chilly—till she weaves new habili-
ments.

BISHOP (*hotly*): What conclusions do your biolo-
gists give us? They war among themselves
worse than—than——

RURIK: The Churches—eh, Bishop?

BISHOP (*heatedly, but goodnaturedly*): You can't
get me off the track, so easily! Professor Kam-
merer has grown eyes in cave newts that
hadn't any, and seen their progeny inherit
the eyes; so he says, "Acquired traits are in-
heritable." The great Russian, Pavlov, says
the same. His mice run to dinner because
their grandpas heard the bell ring. Professor
Bateson scoffs, denies— "environment be
hanged; mating, the stock, is all.—What came
out in the offspring was already there in the
parents."—So, where's your scientific truth?

ZORA: If ignorance may rush in—where learning
dare not tread—may not the rival scientists

all have part of truth? For Professor Kammerer's first blind ancestral newt did have rudimentary eyes, at least; and how can Professor Bateson know what rudimentary faculties sleep in any seed, or life-plasm—perhaps the first that ever was?

BISHOP: Bravo, Madam! Like wise Mr. Justice Monkey in the fable, in breaking this nut you hand the kernel to my side of the argument. For, when all's said—Who gave fiat to the plasm—and its laws?

ZORA: Thanks for poor monkey!—hazed and “ragged” on all sides—misunderstood!

BISHOP: Pray, Madam, don't rate me with those ignoramuses who accuse that poor beast of trying to climb into the best society! I know that neither he nor his friends ever claimed his tree for the human family tree!

RURIK: The dust-throwers on both sides set that myth going. It is kept circulating by those who get returns from it—as with all myths.

ZORA: But there are persons who honestly think evolution means monkey ancestry!

RURIK: I fear that not even Dr. Kammerer could ever fetch out seeing eyes from skulls like theirs!

ZORA: Some fear to have eyes—“lest they should see”!

RURIK: As for the myth-mongers, animals with a blind on are easiest led or driven. Superstition is a blind that gives least trouble to the driver—and never wears out.

BISHOP: Bless me, Rurik! I hadn't guessed you were a doubter——

RURIK: I'm not—I am a believer.

BISHOP: In what?

RURIK: In the liberations of our time.

ZORA (*who has listened intensely, somewhat disturbed*): "The truth alone liberates." Isn't that in the Book you preach, Bishop?

BISHOP: Yes—yes, but interpreted, dear lady! The old interpretations must be safeguarded; the tenets of our ancient faith must not be allowed to—to——

RURIK: To ooze out, Bishop?—or vanish under modern searchlights?

BISHOP: Bless me!

RURIK (*to Zora, noting her eyes upon him, and pondering a disagreeable possibility of chancing on a superstitious bent in her*): And you, you too, are able to cite from the Bishop's textbook?

ZORA (*blushes, nods, murmuring rather than speaking*): Yes——

[*Brampton, the butler, enters from L.*]

BRAMPTON: Pardon me, sir, but the persons you were expecting are at the villa gates. They've been streaming down all the roads and from the heights. There must be thousands there back of the walls. I am almost afraid to open; they might make a rush to get in. They're a ragged and desperate-looking lot.—You never know with that kind, sir!

RURIK: I believe I ought to receive these deputations privately.

BISHOP: Oh, certainly; shall I await you with the others at the landing stage?

RURIK: We shall take off there from the water. With you in a quarter of an hour!

(*Rurik writes on his card.*) Kindly take this to the consul, Brampton, and ask him to be good enough to meet me at the villa gates. Let me know when he comes.

BRAMPTON: Very good, sir. (*Bows and goes off L. at small door in wall up. As it opens and shuts, a roar is momentarily heard.*)

RURIK: We shall have to rely on the consul and accept the Bishop's aid as well, to make distribution to this multitude!

ZORA: Good Heavens! What have I brought down upon you?—I only wanted the poor of Beau-lieu—the sad ones back of all this loveliness, to have comfort on our wedding day. But this inpouring host—the whole Riviera, evidently!

RURIK: Each shall have token of your fellow-feeling this one day.

ZORA: And tomorrow—next week! These hands will be empty again, these cupboards bare—these children, hungry still. Those letters! What desolation—the globe around—this brings it terribly home!

RURIK: We must do what we can—and forget the rest.

ZORA: Forget the rest!—What an awful thing it is to be the possessor of great riches! The

miseries of the whole earth wait always at their doors—beyond any fortune to appease.

RURIK: We have to learn to say “no.”

ZORA: —To the bitterest want, maybe. What then?
—Turn away the eyes—shut up the heart—
this thing will surely happen now to me! I,
too, shall have to say no!—Harden my soul,
then turn and smile at some happy friend.

RURIK: Take heart!

ZORA: It will turn me to stone—to cold steel—As
the old ballad says—“It will tak oot my heart
o’ flesh—put in a heart o’ tree!”

RURIK: There may be hope!—another way!

ZORA: What hope?

RURIK: A long, long hope; as long as it takes to
change life for all the inhabitants of the earth.
But modern methods can shorten time. A
movement is on foot—

ZORA: Ah!

RURIK: Don’t ask me now, to tell you! Can you
trust me a while without question?

ZORA: I do, implicitly, but what you say excites me.

RURIK: I can tell you only this: I am giving myself
wholly to the working out of this new hope.

ZORA: Happy, happy, then, that you control this
fearful money-power—despite its thorns!—
You, with your scientific mastery, you could
turn the bitter waters to pools of refreshing—
make it “a valley of blessing!”—Theodor!—
that is why I married you!

RURIK: Why you—? Why you—! (*low*)—you did
not love me, then?

ZORA: More than love—more!

RURIK: More than love?

ZORA: I could never explain. Ah, remember! I told you—I told you that since long ago, there's been nothing here but a heartache——

RURIK: I know—I know—Don't think I am complaining——

ZORA: Trust me!—You've just asked as much.

RURIK: I do trust you. But your saying was true—the rich have sorrows that others never know—— (*He becomes introspective, still as stone.*)

ZORA: With time—we shall become acquainted once more. Strange! That very first day—when we strayed into each other's path—do you remember, that long walk?—at the first word, there was mutual understanding—we were as clear as dawn to each other?

RURIK (*emotionless—looking inward*): Serene and secure.

ZORA: —And now!—I must try to tell you! People are surprised I can abandon what I have won: fame—and the pleasure of stage-art. And they can't dream what it is to rouse audiences into a flaming world of imagination—live moments with them that make us know truths able to save the soul—or kill it; inexorable hidden toll for common, everyday deeds, echoes of falling tears, shining heights of human glory, and the bottomless, black abyss—the tragedy and doom of the false way! The pity of it began to pierce me with desire to use my life

for life itself. Nothing else could satisfy me any more.

RURIK: Nothing else counts——

ZORA: When you say that—it is to me like—answer to unspoken prayer!

RURIK (*introspectively, with lonely sorrow, as if bowing to fate*): I understand now. It was for the sake of this, you came to me. I was wrong to think that I—some things are not for me—with all my havings.—Forgive me!

ZORA: What is this change in you?—this note in your voice—like the moan of pine trees?—Am I misinterpreting?

RURIK (*tenderly, but with ocean calm*): Oh, no, my Zora! We are comrades—dear comrades of the mind.

ZORA: Oh Theodor—some nameless fear lays hold on me. You seem far away. It's as if a lonely stranger were passing by! Don't think I meant—Wait!

RURIK (*calm, almost impersonal*): Don't sorrow. Mine was the fault—a flaw of the imagination. All is well, my Zora!

ZORA: We shall meet again—I know we shall!

[*A tremendous burst of riotous noise and hubbub from L., indicating that the gates have been opened, letting in the outer roar. Her last words cut across that noise like a despairing cry. Brampton enters.*]

BRAMPTON: The consul is arriving at the gates, sir.

RURIK: Very well, Brampton, I'll join him at once.
(*To Zora*) I'd best tackle them alone, and

come for you when I've reconnoitered. (*Exits with Brampton.*)

[*Above the storm of striving noises that is soon shut off by the evident closing of the wall door, there is heard the rough laughter of a coarse woman's voice. She tears her way through and rushes on with screaming curses as if drunk or mad.*]

ROUGH WOMAN: Let me alone, damn you! I was told to come! (*Wrenches herself loose from the gatekeeper and Brampton who try to seize her. At a gesture from Zora, they desist and fall back out of sight.*) You invited me. I've come! (*Laughs.*) I'm from the States, myself—I'm not the kind you meant in your noble invitation! What you wanted was starving and sores. Well, I'm full of sores—and starving, too—but not for foodstuffs. Ha, you may not believe it, but I, myself, was young once—and clean, too—dreamed of happiness—went to college, damn it! Oh, it makes me laugh!

ZORA: Can I help you in some way?

WOMAN (*Snorts.*)

ZORA: Where do you live?

WOMAN (*springs close to her, whispers in Zora's ear behind her hand, then snickers.*)

ZORA: Oh —Oh!

WOMAN: You'll hardly be calling, I guess!

ZORA (*with infinite kindness*): Tell me, if there is something you need!

WOMAN: Need!— Good God, honey, need—me! (*Changes her tone, lunges fiercely forward,*

barking her words out wolfishly, and dropping spittle like a mad dog.)—Yes—I'll tell you what I need: I need—my body back again! I need—my mind back!—I can't think any more. I need—I need—something else—that's dead and trampled on—I don't know what it is—Lord—"need"—I!—I can't need anything—any more—forever! Damn your pretty happiness! (She makes a move as if to hurt Zora. The porter and Brampton come forward, and as gently as possible, manage to lead her away, Zora following along by her side.)

ZORA: You will hear from me.

WOMAN (*snorts, then, heard off, yelling*): Here comes the kind for you—hooh!—a real beggar!

[The outer roar breaks through a moment, indicating the opening and shutting of the door in the wall. A young man enters, groping. He has the get-up of an ordinary street beggar in those lands: garments of various sorts tethered together; head swathed in faded-colored ragged scarf, partly concealing his features. He is extremely emaciated, his body bent, his gait stumbling, as if hardly able to see yet not totally blind. He is nervous and shattered. He holds before his breast a large board vividly inscribed in French, Italian, and English, "Pity the Blind!"

YOUNG BEGGAR: Is this the Signora?—Pardon me, Madam, I fear I don't see very well!

ZORA (*peering at him curiously*): Young sir, your voice and manner of speech are not those of a beggar!

BEGGAR (*sets down his board*): But I am a beggar,
all right—I don't care, if I get—what I am
going to get—or——

[*His eyes are wild, though a distant observer might see in his attitude only humble supplication. However, he shows her that she is covered by a small revolver hidden in his sleeve.*]

ZORA (*her voice steady and her eyes on him*):
The clever thing would be for you—not to
shoot now—but to wait till tomorrow; that
would give me time, you see, to help you first!

BEGGAR: You think I'm a lunatic!—Well, I am half
mad!—I've had to watch my old mother, sick
and broken down in the munitions factory,
starving—to death—I, I—helpless—when it
was too late—I went out and begged——

ZORA: Where is she?

BEGGAR: I've got her in a hospital now—but no
strength to fight with!

ZORA: We'll do everything in human power to pull
her through. And you? Do take off that
beggar's headdress. (*He clutches it off and
straightens up.*)

ZORA: That's better. Tell me anything you're will-
ing to. We'll do our best to get your eyes back
for you.

BEGGAR (*feverishly*): The trenches took them—and
robbed me of all my hope in life. I was an
architect—in far-away America. After years
of struggle for my mother and me, life began
to brighten. A little house we'd dreamed of—

was coming to pass—and there was another dream in that (*makes a sweeping gesture toward the wedding table*)—someone else—this sort of thing—the war got it all.—Now, my mother, a piteous wreck, and for me, semi-blindness—sometimes total night—finally—this! (*Hangs his head.*)

ZORA (*takes his hands*): Thank God you came to me!

[*Burst of noise heard again as if the door had opened and shut. Both look left.*]

ZORA: Look at that poor woman! What is she carrying?

[*Zora beckons, and goes a little to meet the woman, who runs to her. This woman, wretched and haggard, has on her head the corner of a shawl, the rest of which completely covers an object which she thrusts into Zora's arms, then sinks to the ground, entwining Zora's feet and legs with her arms, hiding her face against them and moaning low, indistinct words in Italian.*]

POOR WOMAN: Signora—Madonna!—pietat!

RURIK (*enters*): Everything is arranged with the consul—but—what?

[*Approaches to peer at object in Zora's arms. Beggar does same. As Zora bends to comfort woman the shawl slips to the ground, disclosing an infant, in skeleton condition. All start at the sight.*]

RURIK: Horrible!

WOMAN: Ha fame! ha fame! ha fame!

ZORA: Poor pale little one! Why—the little thing—
is dead!—Oh, it brings back——

[Rurik lifts the mother, tries to console her; she continues swaying, weeping, and brokenly murmuring.]

WOMAN: O, mio bambino—e morte!——

ZORA (*as if heart were bursting its bounds*): Theo!
With all our boasted learning from Christ to
Darwin and beyond—we still flounder like
fools, wasting life! Theo! Will the time never
come for the human race to cast off this orang-
outang incapacity!

RURIK: That time is now beginning!

[He reaches out and takes the babe, while she puts her arm around the mother. They all go out left as curtain falls.]

SECOND ACT

ACT II

SCENE: Venice by Night

Sheer wall of palazzo, with water in front and seen up right side, rounding corner of palazzo on left, disappearing behind barely outjutting palazzo opposite. High up, an ornate five-ported window with an open, shallow balcony, taking the breadth of the five windows. A narrow pavement with coping and deep-set great door; hitching posts for gondolas. The hour is past midnight. A full moon glimmers on the dark waters and bathes the rosy-white palazzo and balcony in silvery light. The scene recalls one of the etchings of Whistler. Very few street lamps are seen, here and there in the distance, and they are but dim. Now and then a black gondola drifts past or across the canal carrying parties of late home-goers. At times are heard distant voices of merry or half-dreamy laughter, or short passages of stringed music or a half-snatch of song, then silence and the sleeping city in the drift of melting moonlight. Near the great, deep doorway, lapped by the waters, a black gondola pauses. In it is a quartet of musicians—violins and a harp. One of the violinists, though still young and lithe, is somewhat older than his companions. They speak prudently. . . .

MAESTRO: Is this the window of our lovers?

GUIDO: Yes, Maestro. They arrived at night-fall from the Riviera—from Beaulieu.

NALDO: By the air.

MAESTRO: Are you sure it is the Lady Zora?

HARPIST: I am sure, Maestro. Guido and I had the story from the aviator himself.

GUIDO: One of our Italian airmen—American too. He said they were married yesterday. Two Americans. He is the famous scientist and millionaire—Russian-American, he is; she, this great American tragedienne, the illustrious Signora Zora—is from Scotland, they say.

MAESTRO: Ah— I'm sorry he's such a millionaire. Not so interesting to pour out my art for one who must already have more than he wants of life's good things. But the lady—that's different! She is an artist—the world's greatest in her own way.

GUIDO: As you too, Maestro—our Italy's pride, first among all Europe's violinists——

MAESTRO (*cutting him off with friendly gesture*): She has the soul of a poet—is a lover of beauty, of music; and they are both lovers! You know, friends, what strange pleasure I take in gliding like this up under the windows of these lovers who come to spend their first married days in our divine Venezia—they, strangers to us; we, strangers to them. We give them our soul's music in magic strains of my beloved Stradivarius, then float away into the night. They never know it was all for them.

NALDO: If they only knew it was the great maestro himself serenading them—just for the love of it!

MAESTRO: For the love of love, Naldo, for the glory of love—for the glory of music!

[*The gondola passes just around the corner and pauses. They strike their instruments as a very soft undertone of support to the maestro, who stands and, beginning low, plays divinely. A light is seen above within; the window gently opens, Rurik and Zora peer out, then softly come out on the balcony. They listen a moment, then sink to a seat and overhang the balustrade, leaning toward the music. The sweet strains swell into passionate murmuring and dreamy wildness, then soften in gradual subsidence as if in echo of themselves. The gondola glides slowly away, the quartet strings being heard harp-like, receding afar. The two in the balcony, far from realizing that the music was meant for them, have delighted in it surreptitiously.*]

RURIK (*low*): Too much blessing might drug a man to death (*covers his face with his hands.*) So much given to me—so much, I am ashamed!

ZORA: I think I understand——

RURIK: How?

ZORA: Do you know, you were the one man in the world I had no desire to meet.

RURIK: Why?

ZORA: Beyond all other men in riches, in genius, in vast congeries of work—I thought you must be the most surfeited and self-satisfied of mortals.

RURIK: How could you ever care for such a man? (*She does not answer at once; he presses*)—Yet, you married me——

ZORA: I had to—I couldn't help it.

RURIK: Zora!

ZORA: That first day of our meeting, during that long walk, I was taken aback, astonished: Instead of the satiated individual I had pictured, I found you the hungriest soul I had ever met.

RURIK: Strange! No one ever guessed that before.

ZORA: It seemed as if all that life had heaped up to you, your own work even, was only a drop of water in the sandy desert, for any power to slake your spirit's need:

RURIK: —How could you know it?

ZORA: I suppose I, too, am one of the insatiates. The fathomless discontent in you drew me. When you said, "Come!" I went, I flew, without stopping to think——

RURIK (*taking her head in his two hands*): Oh, you are as I would have you!

ZORA (*halting his impulse*): Then, too—I was panting for someone to tell me the kinds of things you know—(*he droops his head slightly*). —Remember, I was giving up something I had won for myself——

RURIK: Yes, I trembled lest you could not; and when you did—I wondered——

ZORA: Even before I met you, a new idea had laid hold of me. The most glittering toys had begun to lose their lure. Art is, of course, the brightest human plaything, but—perhaps one grows up.

RURIK: What is the new enchantment?

ZORA: I almost fear to say——

RURIK: —Fear!

ZORA: What if we should discover that our ways of thinking are at opposite poles—perhaps hostile?

RURIK: Never that, my Zora!

ZORA: The ideas of each of us came through work; for one of us—suffering; perhaps for you, too?

RURIK (*with cool reserve*): I am not unacquainted with sorrow.

ZORA: Thought-ways so formed are obstinate. Mutual failure to understand now would be like—oh, the smash of two worlds!

RURIK: Have no fear. That inner sanctuary where each is forever solitary shall be sacred. Tell me your new enchantment!

ZORA: How shall I say it? You see, you men of science find your pleasure in exploring the outer moulds of things. For no matter how many parts you find in a cracked atom, physical Nature, even in its finest, is, after all, only the container, isn't it?—made up of outer shells. There must be an "inner" somewhere.

RURIK: You mean, I deal more with the mechanistic aspect of nature; you, more with the psychological?

ZORA: Just that! My whole study has had to do with moral interpretation—a different aim from yours. Character in human life is what interests me most; the film of human character in all its ways; in all that human character is—all it may yet become. There! You have my secret—what life may yet become!—What the earth-drama means; what is this play we each have our part in? We two sit here to-

night and gaze into that eternal eye. You want to know about the structure, the atoms—the brain-cells of it, so to speak. What I want to learn is the story being told; what is all that glorious mechanism doing? What is that eye perceiving? What is being created up there—down here?

RURIK: I have some hopes that will mean much to you.

ZORA: The hopes you mentioned yesterday—

RURIK: I cannot speak fully now; but oh, Zora—this love of ours is holy!

ZORA: Every boy and girl in love thinks that!

RURIK: And it is doubtless true. But to the ignorant, it is only instinct; others of us know, and knowing makes time itself like immortality. You said “being created.” What is your understanding of that?

ZORA: Your friend’s four-toed horse can tell it!

RURIK: Oh, that interests you!

ZORA: When my sleek and beautiful hunter, Colin Gray, kneels in supple grace for me to mount his back, I remember that animal’s past progress, as your friends show it, step by step, in the layers of the earth’s crust. Am I not then, in the Creator’s workshop? Isn’t this actually to stand in the presence of an animal in the making—of divine action?

RURIK: You talk evolution!

ZORA: —But not *Origin of Species*; Lord deliver me from that! When your biologists ferret that out, it will be interesting!

RURIK: Sometimes best not know our forefathers!

ZORA: However reckless as to ancestry, our descendants need watching,—don't you think? What lays hold of me is the practical meaning to the race—as we know it—of this evolution. That has been able to sever me from my former dreams. Getting ourselves ahead—human destiny, that is the great work!

RURIK: Could you give yourself up wholly to such a task?

ZORA: Every other life-aim pales in comparison!—As those stars, that could still endure the moon, are now fading out before the coming Venice dawn!

RURIK: Your words warm me as the sun will warm the earth. They speak my own thoughts, my own desire; they make me feel sure of you. What would you say if I told you of a concrete plan—an organization (*she bends eagerly*) extending around the earth, with a working agency in every country, for taking these very conceptions we speak of out of the secret studies of our philosophers, out of our laboratories, and making them the energizing forces of a new world?

ZORA: *Gloria in excelsis Deo!*—Give me part in this!

RURIK: If I should ever come to initiate you, make you a fellow-helper, you would have to become as quiet as that sky, and guard what I should impart as remotely. Can you?

ZORA: I can! I am skilled in the control of my faculties. I could become like eternal rock.

RURIK: And that it would have to be. What I should make you a part of is sterner far than rock; for even the everlasting hills of stone fall shattered into dust before the power I am able to wield.

ZORA: I seem to see a God at play!

RURIK: It means dealing like a God with life and death, not merely of individuals, but the leveling, if need be, of whole armies at a single stroke—of whole cities—whole peoples. I have perfected means of using a force, able in an instant of time to lay the inhabited earth in ruins. (*As he speaks his voice is low and level and his eyes straight before him. His spirit is like the restraint of measureless pride, almost arrogance. She looks at him motionless, under the spell of his mood.*)

ZORA: How awful for a human being—

RURIK: With this power we are going to make the world over, rebuild humanity. The cancers of idiocy and disease that have poisoned the race shall be burnt out.

ZORA: Do any other persons possess knowledge of this force or its use?

RURIK: None. The trust is too fearsome.

ZORA: I trembled to think your scientific friends might share this secret.

RURIK: This knowledge will go to the grave with me. Men are as yet too untrustworthy—too much the slaves of personal ambition.

ZORA: Too unevolved. One dare not think of a man like Professor Pomack with such a means.

RURIK (*smiling faintly*): Oh, Pomack—a very slight individual—a petty person.

ZORA: But malignant. Aren't you afraid to have him connected with your plans? Won't he get at this thing?

RURIK: He cannot. He is not really in touch with any inside working; he imagines himself more important than he is.

ZORA: I fear he has some evil intent. Yesterday in his presence I felt as if a snake—a rattlesnake—were near. But forgive me for poisoning the moment by a thought of him!—Initiate me into your plans!

RURIK: You may not realize what you ask; some actions are too stern for women.

ZORA: What you want, I want. I give my oath (*stands facing him, holding up her right hand*) here in the face of God, by the coming day: if ever I betray your trust in the smallest degree, even should nature, beyond my will, cause me to hinder you or falter or fail your designs—that day I die!

RURIK: No, Zora—no! You shall not make such an oath—I take your word—your bare word——

ZORA: Are not your other partners everywhere on earth bound by oath?

RURIK: By the strongest that man can pronounce. But not you—your word is enough!

ZORA (*smiling*): My oath is already registered. The recording angel up there got it. I can't take it back. I am glad—glad! A splendid day is dawning. We two here, looking out from this

balcony in Venice across the earth—it's as if we could see already a stronger, healthier race of men: Nations with new happiness of a great conscious aim, working for the fulfilment of the faculties and powers in each, and not one denied the chance! I am wild to know your method—our method, henceforth. What is your basic principle of achievement?

RURIK: The sole principle which human beings in the mass have ever bowed to or understood: the principle of superior force—mastery.

ZORA: Mastery—?

RURIK: Inexorable discipline—conquest, if you will.

ZORA (*half-stunned at the thought*): Not — by — killing — or fire of battle?

RURIK: Not battle fire; but killing, if need be, weeding out.

ZORA: O-oh!

RURIK: The earth is sodden in ignorance. Men must be made to understand that the time has come when they have got to submit to a reasonable system scientifically worked out to produce the best human results obtainable with the best material available.

ZORA: Suppose—in their ignorance or bad will—they fail to recognize at first the value of that scientific scheme, and refuse or fail to submit?

RURIK: Then, they have the fate of the brute whom the policeman has to club to prevent him from beating his wife to death or braining his children.

ZORA: Your great club would be lifted against such
—against whole nations? Its shadow would
be over the whole world?

RURIK: Precisely. Forced to universal education
and ethical conduct during some parts of per-
haps three generations, they will develop a
right mental attitude. By degrees they will
become reasonable and responsible.

ZORA: Until then—authority absolute, using the fear
of immediate extinction as disciplinary wea-
pon?

RURIK: No other means can be expected to obtain
synthetic results from the herds of the igno-
rant, savage, and mentally indigent that people
the globe.

ZORA: But you cannot live forever, can you?

RURIK: —Even so—

ZORA: Suppose your scheme works, as long as you
and your death-engine are there to see it
through; how can it be assured in succeeding
generations?

RURIK: Some temporary, authoritative hierarchy of
control would doubtless be necessary.

ZORA: But where can be found a sufficient number
of guiding spirits, able enough and pure
enough from self-interest to form such a body
of authority?

RURIK: When once the system has been imposed,
it will be our care in all lands to recruit and
train devoted men and women for the task.

ZORA: But means of discipline—

RURIK: Moral discipline should gradually get power.

ZORA: Meanwhile, wouldn't your hierarchy of authority, binding all nations, repeat monstrously the worst horror the human race could ever fall into—enslave it finally and hopelessly?

RURIK: You touch the most perilous point of our whole calculation: is the race yet enough advanced even to learn to walk alone?

ZORA: Has it reached the stage where any world-wide control would fail to become humanity's ruthless exploiter for the satisfaction of power-lust?

RURIK: If we can force them to learn what it is to be a human being, and hold that knowledge for a generation even—surely they could never fall back entirely. —Otherwise—no hope! The race goes under the upheaving gross mass. The world's blood is up and rising——

ZORA: I can imagine a hope!

RURIK: In any other plan?

ZORA: My own studies of character have led me to think of a different means of influence and training the brain-cells.

RURIK (*smiling*): I'm curious——

ZORA: When supreme devotion and sacrifice are asked, what is given?

RURIK: Generally, some lie about "saving humanity," or——

ZORA: An ideal, you mean!—Don't men die for that?

RURIK: I fear idealism must be looked upon rather as a result than as a cause.

ZORA: Yet, can even science—when it aims at the practical regulation of life—afford to leave out

of account that man is a worshiper by nature, grows according to his worships?

RURIK: How would you get your ideal into the brain-pans of the human generality?

ZORA: I have in mind a method—but, somehow, though I trust you, I find I fear, as yet, to expose this youngling of my notions to—scientific scorn!

RURIK (*reproachfully*): Zora! Tell me!

ZORA: If a shining standard were set up high enough, could not even the uneducated be made to see it?

RURIK: Ignorance has no eyes!

ZORA: If human and vivid enough, they might recognize it more easily than you think, and take it as their hope.

RURIK: You believe—!

ZORA: At the theater, it is the poor and lowly and heavily burdened who are the most easily roused by the heroes. The generality of men want to believe in goodness when they can clearly see it and can be sure it is goodness and not humbug. Men fear to give themselves up to belief in another man; but when they find one who seems trustworthy, they will follow him to the death. We interpreters come full early to note these traits in the human make-up. They are potent social energies worthy of study by all world-builders.

RURIK: You mistrust the use of force as we plan it?

ZORA: I do pin my faith above all, in setting up a goal before the people—a goal of individual attainment.

RURIK: Through what magic spectacles can they be made to see a goal of which their ignorance can form no conception?

ZORA: It's my belief they could be brought to see and desire such an achievement; though it be so far ahead. Almost, perhaps, as far ahead of even you and me as it is of them.

RURIK: When men can set up such a standard for themselves, their battle will be already half won. Meanwhile at any price they must be forced out of this primitive state of incompetence and indifference.

ZORA: I would win them forth! Let the few, with your rich means at command, lift up the standard and show the others why it is theirs—their own greatest good.

RURIK: I only wish some way might be discovered by which an idea of an exalted standard of life could be conveyed to ignorant minds!

[The sky becomes glorious with sunrise; she starts to speak, then shivers, reels, shudders.]

ZORA: I feel faint—!

RURIK: Good God, what is the matter?—Zora! You are ill!

[He assists her in, closes the window. The light is put on within, though the morning has dawned. When the stage is empty, a man emerges from within the dark recess of the deep door beneath the balcony,

his back to the audience; laughs very low, his mean little laugh. As he turns he is seen to be Pomack. After he has spoken he disappears around the corner.]

POMACK: "A rattlesnake," eh?—But there are snakes without the warning rattle!

[The city noises of awakening life are vaguely heard—a distant snatch of a boatman's song—as the curtain descends.]

THIRD ACT

ACT III

SCENE: Venice

[Flooded with bright afternoon sunshine, a high-ceilinged, richly but severely furnished room in the Venetian palazzo, conveying impression of wide spaces and calm. The wall R. is mostly taken up with the fivefold window looking out on a shallow balcony, the outside aspect of which was the scene of Act II. Door L. leads into bedroom. Door in back wall extreme L. opens into small antechamber, the further wall of which is dimly visible when door is open. A stairway from antechamber is supposed to lead to floor below and to street. In the main room (the stage), a long narrow table up and down the room before the window, R., but leaving easy space for passage between it and window, the panels of which are open. There are Venetian seats, chairs, and other pieces in like style about; one great chair, not very high-backed, near head of the table. Along the stage side of table and close against it up and down stage is a long, narrow sofa.]

[As curtain rises Dr. Agnew and Nurse, to whom he speaks low, come softly out of bedroom L., gently closing door, and are cautiously tiptoeing up to exit by antechamber, when a man who has been asleep on the couch almost out of sight of audience awakens and sits up. The doctor and the nurse turn to him. He shivers slightly, throwing off drowsiness, and springs to his feet. It is Rurik. They all speak gently, as if careful not to disturb a sleeper in the bedroom.]

DR. AGNEW: Bravo, Rurik!

RURIK (*grasping doctor's hand warmly*): You see, Doctor, I followed your orders.

DR. AGNEW (*smiling*): At last!

RURIK: Now that the danger is past, I seemed to sink into a sleep of the ages——

NURSE: Ten hours, sir. (*Rurik laughs heartily and happily, but low.*)

DR. AGNEW: You did well. This long vigil during the poor lady's fever was beginning to tell on you badly. With one patient on the way to recovery I thought I was about to have another on my hands. You seemed headed for a breakdown; but here you are, as fresh as an Alp at sunrise!

RURIK: It's the sense of relief. You are sure there is no further danger?

DR. AGNEW: Simple care is all that is called for now. She will be able to travel within a few days. The heart has, of course, been left weakened, but that will reassert itself in time. She is sleeping at present.

RURIK (*pressing doctor's hand, then speaking to nurse*): An airing this whole afternoon will do you good. Go; you need not report until midnight—or not at all tonight, if you like. As I shall be on duty here, no need tonight for anyone else—am I right, Doctor?

DR. AGNEW (*to nurse*): You have my permission. (*To Rurik*) You ought to sleep another ten hours to consolidate your forces.

NURSE (*turning near door up*): I shall report then, sir, at nine——

RURIK: No—no! Take the night off. Tomorrow I shall sleep again. If you come at seven in the morning that will do perfectly.

NURSE: Thank you, sir. I shall enjoy the outing!

RURIK (*as she disappears*): I am sure you deserve it——

DR. AGNEW: I must say, Rurik, you have shown yourself, during all these weeks of anxious watching, the ablest nurse I ever had. —Not the most agreeable way in the world to spend a honeymoon!

RURIK: It was strange for her to be stricken suddenly like that, the very day after our wedding. The picture of health in the morning—and a few hours later in the grip of ague and a fever that struck like an assassin's knife from ambush,—a fever that fought from the first hour with rage for her very life.

DR. AGNEW: The case has been unusual, though not unknown. Has she any enemies—who might desire her taking off?

RURIK: None, I know of (*interrupted by entrance of Italian housekeeper with cards on a tray*)—

HOUSEKEEPER: Pardon, Excellency!—But zere ees Signori below. Zey come to see you, Excellency.

RURIK (*taking cards*): Kirkland, Barrows—Pomack, too. He always manages to attach himself to our friends. I wonder what—(*to Housekeeper*)—that will do, Lena. I'll go down to

them at once. (*To Doctor*)—I want you to meet these friends, Agnew. (*Goes.*)

[*The instant he has passed out the woman slips back into the room, seizing doctor's hand emotionally; detaining him from following Rurik, she speaks somewhat wildly but in suppressed tones.*]

HOUSEKEEPER: Signor Dottore! Tell me—eef you geev sometings to make seek somebodie—not to kill—and somebodie, she getta vell—no die, and you vant to tell vat you do to varn somebodie—to take care 'bout bad man—tell me, Signor Dottore, can zee police take you in preeson?

DR. AGNEW: What—what's that you say?

HOUSEKEEPER (*overcome emotionally, whispering fiercely and pantingly*): Oh, Signor Dottore—la signora ees so good—so kind—I am a poor vomans—me gotta five chilluns—me man, he ees good—he no tink harm—

DR. AGNEW: Good God!

HOUSEKEEPER: Oh, Signor Dottore—zere ees vone bad man—who vant evil to la signora!

DR. AGNEW: What man—who is it?

[*Rurik, interrupting, enters with the three others, whom he introduces to the doctor; as he names them to one another he takes them to extreme R., by window. The woman remains up near door.*]

RURIK: Dr. Agnew came at my call from London, and has safely brought my poor dear wife through. She is sleeping at present; her room is there. I don't think our voices will reach

her. We will sit on this side of the room if you don't mind (*in gesture indicates balcony, the others glancing at view.*)

LORD KIRKLAND (*giving typed report to Rurik*): This concerns you seriously. (*Opening to one or two places, both men reading.*)

[*The woman near the door has managed, unperceived by the others, to touch the doctor's sleeve, attracting his eye. She swiftly makes "jettatura" and other signs against "evil eye," pointing her fingers at Pomack's back, indicating to doctor by nods and grimaces, but without words that he "ees ze bad man." Then she rapidly slips out of the room, closing the antechamber door after her. The doctor looks sharply at the three men—at Pomack, shrewdly.*]

RURIK: Tomorrow morning, then, Doctor, I shall expect you? No need to come again tonight, eh?

DR. AGNEW: You know I have nothing else to do in Venice. I think I shall keep within reach—at the hotel—in case you want me for any reason. (*Comes near Rurik and says sotto voce but firmly*): Come out with me a moment!

[*Rurik hesitates slightly, glancing toward the sick-room, then goes with doctor, pausing an instant at the door. The eyes of the three others are upon him, all silent.*]

DR. AGNEW: Pardon me, if I claim our friend for a moment, but I have a rather important last injunction for him!

[Rurik looks puzzled, but goes out with him, the doctor pulling the door of the anteroom shut after them. Lord Kirkland and Barrows go out on balcony, and look across Venice, with a gesture or so.]

LORD KIRKLAND: This low sun over Venice is more like Turner than Caneletto!

[Meanwhile, Pomack picks up Report from table where Rurik had left it, opens the pages an instant, then closes it, replaces it where he had found it, and turns toward the window. Rurik returns—and the others all come forward cordially to take up the thread of their meeting. He is restrained under controlled emotion; his eyes flash a swift look at Pomack, but mask quickly.]

LORD KIRKLAND: Affairs are moving forward rather rapidly, Rurik. The reports we bring, both written and verbal, are of utmost urgency, and there are decisions in your province alone, as you will see. Otherwise we should not have ventured to invade your privacy at the bedside of your ill wife.

[Rurik is about to answer, taking up Report, when Pomack cuts in with artificial good nature, simulated goodfellowship, and his usual little half-laugh of false candor.]

POMACK: You've certainly had your share of trouble, Theodor—Our thoughts have been right with you, you know that!—But of course—no personal interest—or—attachment—is to stand in the way of—of—the—the—great work—so, of course—I——

RURIK: Yes?—

[*Pomack, uneasy, under the look of Rurik fixed squarely upon his face as he speaks, overdoes effort to be natural, is disturbed, falters, stammers, finishing with a slight gulp, as Rurik gazes into his eyes with deadly silence. Pomack for a moment finds no words come, held up by Rurik's stare, which he dares not avoid. The pause is uncomfortable for all present, the two other men wondering. Then, Pomack, in a jerk, continues*]:

POMACK: That's our oath, isn't it?—No lives can be held more precious than the great cause—which will sacrifice whole races if necessary—

RURIK: Professor Pomack, I desire to have Lord Kirkland and Dr. Barrows alone for a short consultation; I fear I must ask you to be good enough to withdraw for a time.

POMACK (*loudly*): Why should I?

LORD KIRKLAND: I say!—Come, now, Pomack! Remember there is an ill person in the next room!

POMACK (*brutally raising his voice still higher*): I am a member of the Council. I have a right to be present.

RURIK: Hus-sh-sh!

LORD KIRKLAND: This is outrageous! Rurik, we will go at once.

BARROWS: Set a time for a meeting elsewhere at your convenience—send word to the hotel——

LORD KIRKLAND: We must positively henceforth disassociate ourselves from Professor Pomack. Do forgive this most unpardonable indiscretion!

[*They approach the door to go, Rurik following them up.*]

RURIK: I shall do as you suggest. If my wife should be awakened by voices in altercation, the consequences might be fatal.

POMACK (*planting himself in the center of the room and beginning in a low hissing voice, gradually raising it to a boom*): I know what I am about. Oaths have been sworn to: —no interest—least of all, personal, shall halt or hinder the supreme undertaking!

RURIK: For God's sake, man, don't bellow here!

POMACK: I, personally, shall go ahead with it if the others hesitate——

BARROWS: What do you mean?

LORD KIRKLAND: What are you menacing?

RURIK: You!!

POMACK (*topping their crescendo of intensity, but with noise*): My men have been in your laboratories——

LORD KIRKLAND }
BARROWS } : What——what!

POMACK: I too have worked out a means of wholesale destruction—for that's the only vital necessity in this business; I have discovered your formula——

RURIK: Impossible—You never will!

POMACK: That's to be seen——

RURIK: It is nowhere recorded. Your mind, however skilful in adapting the originations of others, is incapable of creative invention.

POMACK (*dropping to the low, intense tone in which Rurik had spoken, but in a boasting voice, the others listening in deadly breathlessness, feeling the importance of knowing the bottom of the man's mind*): Many young men are at work for me, tracing out what is being done in laboratories all over the world. I have established every link in the calculations I want but one, and that I shall soon get. Meanwhile, my chemists have reported discoveries which give me forces of human destruction—not sudden and painless like yours—not yet able to cover vast areas at a single throw—but sufficient for my purposes. Tomorrow's sun may bring you proof of what I say—I have in my possession all the world plans worked out by the Council—and I tell you nothing can prevent me from heading a movement of my own!

RURIK: You ought not to leave this room alive. You know that you are a cold murderer—in heart—and in act!

POMACK: So!—You have found that out! (*curiously, to himself but aloud*)—How?—I wonder (*to them*)—I am safe. Scandal in the camp at this stage would not help the cause. Besides, nothing could be proved. But—as you want me out——

[*He goes quickly to the door of the anteroom and thrusts it open suddenly, disclosing the Italian house-keeper crouching back of it. He seizes her by the neck, shakes her, jams her about, and flings her down.*]

POMACK: What!—You!—So it was you—you damned telltale!

[The woman tears herself free from his grip and yells out deliriously, pointing at him jabbingly.]

HOUSEKEEPER: You bad man!—He give me bottle of water to make drink la Signora—He say, “no die!—ony seek.” I ony give one time—I trow bottle in canal—I am a poor vomans!

[From anteroom she protrudes her head and arms into main room. Her husband, Antonelli, appears back of her; Pomack seizes him, swears at him, throwing them both to the floor, and escapes down the stairway, followed by Antonelli. The woman on the floor moans weakly.]

HOUSEKEEPER: He hava me kill!—I die!

[This whole scene is smothered, partly in sight of the audience and partly not. All the persons on the stage are about the door, which Rurik finally succeeds in shutting after him as he enters the anteroom.]

RURIK (*to Lord Kirkland and Barrows*): Wait here —I’ll look after the woman. (*The two men rush out on the balcony; their attitude and exclamations show that something is occurring below.*)

LORD KIRKLAND: The Italian moves like a panther! (*Barrows joins him to look over balcony. A dull thud and splash in the water faintly heard from below.*)

BARROWS: Good Heavens!

LORD KIRKLAND: By jove!

[Rurik enters from anteroom, shutting door after him. As they leave balcony, he joins them near window, all forming a close group far down stage, right corner. They speak low and with restraint.]

RURIK: The woman's hurt was slight. Did you see anything out there?

BARROWS: Pomack was walking leisurely away as if nothing had happened,—no one else in sight. The Italian came stealthily around the corner, sprang catlike close to him; I saw no gesture, but Pomack spun around once and fell in a heap. The Italian quietly slid the body over the parapet into the canal, then strolled back, quite casually, and turned the corner as if to enter the house.

[The three men go partly out on the balcony and peer cautiously down; then with gesture showing they think it best not to be seen there, they return to room. Before speaking they pause in silence to exchange looks.]

RURIK: The waters of silence!

BARROWS: Caught in his own trap——

LORD KIRKLAND: Well, well, it is not our affair. If you say so, Barrows, we will push ahead to-night to Vienna. (*Indicating Report on the table*)—It will, perhaps, be as well to await there a call from you when you have looked this over?

RURIK: I quite agree——

BARROWS: Best under the circumstances——

LORD KIRKLAND: With your wife still further on the road to recovery, your mind will be freer for the grave business ahead of us.

RURIK: She will be able to travel in a day or two. I shall take her for convalescence to Siltz-Maria, Switzerland. Perhaps you'll join us there. *(They acquiesce as he speaks, all moving toward door.)*

BARROWS: Certainly—

LORD KIRKLAND: My best wishes, pray, to Madame!

BOTH: All congratulations to her—on her escape from the worst! *(At the door, ready to exit, the three men turn, to glance toward balcony.)*

BARROWS: It is a good thing that has happened.

LORD KIRKLAND: A very trying person to be forced to associate with—The man was a Judas!

RURIK: Well, the evil of him is gone. —Requiescat—!

[He goes out with them, returning instantly; throws himself into a chair with the Report which he has picked up from the table. Presently he looks up toward door on left as if hearing a sound. It opens and Zora comes swiftly into the room in a light, wavering, uncertain movement as if her feet scarcely touched the floor. He starts toward her and she takes refuge in his arms.]

RURIK: Zora!

ZORA: Thank God, you are safe!

RURIK: What do you mean?

ZORA: What happened at the end?

RURIK: You heard?

ZORA: Pomack's threats—but not everything. What was Lena screaming?—What was she saying?

RURIK: You could not make out?

ZORA: A word here and there—then a lull, some kind of hubbub—then, silence—ages of awful silence!

RURIK: Be calm—be calm!

ZORA: I was frozen with fear—What was it?

RURIK: Nothing, dear, wait!

ZORA: Oh, I must be told——

RURIK: Nothing has happened—that ought not to have happened. (*He has been supporting her in his arms, standing. He moves as if to place her on the couch.*)

RURIK: Will you rest here awhile?

ZORA: No-no! I can't bear to lie down. I must sit up!

[*He assists her into the large carved chair, makes her comfortable with pillows from the couch, foot-stool, etc.*]

RURIK: If you are very good and quiet, it may cheer you to rest here awhile from bed and the other room. The doctor intended to bring you out here tomorrow anyway——

ZORA (*with sigh of pleasure*): How the golden evening glows in the room! I feel so well here, like this—how good it is!

RURIK: But don't forget one thing, the long fight with the fever has weakened your heart for the time. That's the only danger, now, Dr.

Agnew says. But it's a real danger; we must guard against over-excitement.

ZORA: If only you would tell me what took place—I know there was something grave.

RURIK: Rest gently here a little. Put what you heard out of your mind. Tomorrow, when you are still stronger and quiet you shall know everything exactly as it was——

ZORA: Tell me—in one word. I can be calm——

[*A single loud knock on the anteroom door startles them. Rurik springs up. Two men in uniform open the door, enter, salute, and stand just inside. Rurik motions them to withdraw, going to them, but they remain as they were. One man speaks and the other takes notes in a blank book.*]

FIRST CARABINERI: Pardon, Excellency! But the body of a dead man has been recovered from the canal—under your balcony. The man had been seen coming out of this palazzo——

RURIK (*trying to stop him and get them out, approaches near and speaks in a confidential tone*): One moment, sir, please! This lady is ill. Step outside, won't you; I'll join you.

FIRST CARABINERI (*stolidly*): Pardon, Excellency; my duty!—A freshly stained knife has been found inside the door (*showing it*). Have you or the signora seen this before?

RURIK (*in despair, as kindly as possible but irresistibly, edging him out into the anteroom*): Come, sir, I will give you full information outside first. Then, if you wish, you can return.

FIRST CARABINIERI (*inclined to protest, but yielding*):
You see, Excellency——

RURIK: Yes, yes, I know—but you will understand——

[*Makes sign as if confidentially to him, referring to her. Man decides to go and motions his companion out. With Rurik they enter anteroom, closing door after them. While Rurik is absent she first bends tensely toward antechamber as if to catch any sounds; then looks toward balcony, partly rising; sees Report, without picking it up, turns one page, reads: "This grave action involving the fate—the very lives of so many—must wait solely on yourself——" The words clutch at her heart, but she controls herself, softly sinking back into her chair, and resuming position of motionless strained attention toward upper door. He returns, hastening anxiously to her.*]

RURIK: My poor dear—my dear! It's a wonder you didn't drop dead under this shock. Your poor heart—you are so white. Come, let me get you quickly to bed!

ZORA (*becoming strangely self-controlled*): Theo!—
You can't imagine how calm I am. (*Anxious gesture from him.*) You forget—I am trained to self-control.—My heart stands still if I tell it to,—see! (*places his hand over her heart.*)
Count the beats!

RURIK: What will-power!

ZORA: No, habit—educated nerve-cells.

RURIK (*relieved*): Now I know all's well with you,
thank God!

ZORA: The dead man is——?

RURIK: Pomack.

ZORA (*shrilly*): Whose dagger was it?

RURIK: Antonelli's.

ZORA: His!—Why?

RURIK: Pomack paid them to feed you infection. The woman, conscience-stricken, confessed, and Pomack struck her down. Antonelli followed him out, stabbed him, and left his body in the canal. Kirkland and Barrows saw the deed from the balcony. These men just here belong to the police-boat patrol——

ZORA: But the Antonellis—Have they arrested them?

RURIK: No. Both have disappeared. The whole lower part of the palazzo is left deserted. (*The room grows dim as dusk deepens.*)

ZORA: A dark shadow has gone from your path!

RURIK: It was his own doing.

ZORA: Look!—The stars are coming out——

RURIK: Now that your fears are all fled you will be able to sleep in peace. Come!

ZORA: Not yet! Let's sit here a little longer. I am just as comfortable here, and it's so restful. Don't put the lights on—unless, if you like, you light those old wax candles in the candelabra, there.

RURIK (*lighting the candles*): As you wish. —If you are more at ease here; I am nurse and doctor too tonight. They have all been given the eye-ning off.

ZORA: Ah—that's good!

[*He sits on the broad arm of her chair, pillowing her head against him, their faces toward the night-sky.*]

RURIK: Strange, for us to be alone, here, in this old palazzo——

ZORA: With the stars coming out over Venice; and that new, crisp moon——

RURIK: When we last saw it together it was the old moon; now, the young moon, reversing the order of things. Won't my patient come now, and be put to bed?

[*She replies by a smiling gesture of refusal, a sweet, pleading look, which he answers by an amused expression. He goes into bedroom. She reaches out to table, letting her hand and her eyes rest a moment on the Report. He returns, bringing her a cup of something hot and dragging along a silken cover, which he tucks about her. After she has taken the potion, he places cup on a stand at back out of sight. While he does these things she softly murmurs her pleasure and comfort. As they talk, he moves about the room, sometimes at the balcony a moment or sitting on the corner of the table, resuming his position on the arm of her chair or other restful grouping when their talk becomes serious. They speak lightly, from happy hearts.*]

ZORA: Won't you light a cigarette—as in old times? (*He does so.*) —It's odd, Theo, but I feel strangely well and strong. (*Glances again toward the Report.*) Do you remember our talk on the balcony, there,—when the moon

was old? —and the oath that made me a partner in your plans?

RURIK: I hope it won't distress you to know that in your fever you went over it all again and again?

ZORA: Did I say things I should not have said?

RURIK: People in delirium often speak the contrary of their minds.

ZORA: What did I say—tell me!

RURIK: Well, it was against my plans, spoken with utmost horror. You poured out wild tirades as to an audience in prophecy—menace, even. Once or twice you were impressive. —Said real things—things I can never quite forget.

ZORA: Oh, what were those true things? say!

RURIK (*with calming gesture*): Not now, dearest; another time we'll talk of this; not now—one day.

ZORA: Tomorrow?

RURIK: Maybe; or soon.

ZORA: Let me ask, what occurred today—this Pomack affair—did it remind you of anything I said in my fever?

RURIK: Did you know what you were talking about?

ZORA: Helplessly, sometimes, I heard myself trying to say a thing I had prayed God to let me live to say to you.

RURIK: You were like Cassandra, possessed and obsessed by something you stammered and struggled in vain to tell.

ZORA (*with rising fervor*): Unless I could tell him that—I saw my comrade wandering forever in Hell's ways—I mean, on the wrong road——

RURIK: H-sh-sh!! —My dear, control yourself; no excitement, I implore—wait, tomorrow——

ZORA: No. —Something tells me I must go on, now. Suppose my heart were to fail suddenly—and my tongue could never more speak the word I want to leave with you? You who have power to make it good—more power than any other man on earth, scientific knowledge, world knowledge—knowledge of humankind—genius to understand, organize, achieve—and untold riches—which open all the doors of this world! Surely, you will come to see the truth of what I want to say.— You will, if I say it—even if long after I am gone——

RURIK (*alarmed at her feeling, but speaking gently, taking her hands quietly, as if dealing with one on the verge of delirium*): My dear one! —I want to know your thoughts. I will sit here and listen—(*on arm of chair, then kneeling by her, rising and gradually taking other positions*). —Have no fear to speak; I will consider your ideas with open mind—only——

ZORA: “Be calm”—Isn't that it? (*Self-possessed again.*) You shall see what it is to have nerve-cells trained to self-control——

RURIK: Good!

ZORA (*glancing toward Report*): Your organization is solely in the hands of men of science, isn't it?

RURIK: The foremost in every civilized land.

ZORA: And its work?

RURIK: The development of the race, profiting by what science in all its branches has mastered or may master.

ZORA: Glorious! It would be disreputable for mankind to put off tackling the problem as a whole, using all it knows, as you say—and out to win. I'm with you body and soul! —As I remember (*scanning his face and glancing at Report*), your idea is to enforce your system by the terrible means of destruction you have invented?

RURIK: When necessary——

ZORA: When will that be?

RURIK: When it becomes clearly evident that elements or groups of the populations are fundamentally deficient in factors vital to the race—incapable of reacting to conditions of advance—they will be painlessly eliminated for the general good.

ZORA: You mean—— You'd cut off those lives for their ignorance or defectiveness?

RURIK: Where hopeless.

ZORA: What if you yourself were not acting according to the highest understanding?

RURIK: I follow the light I have and bear the burden of responsibility.

ZORA: But are you yourself not—lacking compared with your ideals?

RURIK: God knows, yes!

ZORA: Aren't you and I as far from Christ as—the caveman is from us?

RURIK: Probably. Certainly, if by "Christ" you mean perfection.

ZORA: Your own efforts are faulty, experimental as yet. What if the Governor up There were to cut off your own chance to learn and grow?—and the hearts that break for loved ones lost!

RURIK: But if those "loved ones" are poisoners—polluters—murderers of life?

ZORA: Where can the evil-doer mend, if not here? Where can better ideas be set in his skull, if not right here?

RURIK: We shall aid evolution to do just that, by cutting away the hopelessly rotten material, then developing the sound.

ZORA: Who are the rottenest of all?

RURIK: First, those who trample down life for their own lust of gain.

ZORA: Forgive me, but the vast fortunes you have inherited—were they not—to some extent——

RURIK: Full of stain—unavoidably; I may expiate.

ZORA: Next to the trampers of life?

RURIK: Nations taking the road of military conquest. However skilfully they may have prepared their excuse for war, they will be put under pain of the mass annihilation of their militant forces.

ZORA: Ah, but the statesmen——

RURIK: —Those responsible for the war intrigue, will suffer the same. We will have no more war!

ZORA: With you there! But what if the machine to down war is a war-maker—itself the slayer?

-
- RURIK: Without discipline there can be no control.
- ZORA: —For the mentally and morally defective, I know. —But could not the discipline be of an educational or—hospital kind?
- RURIK: We must try for the best and surest results in the shortest time.
- ZORA: But in founding your new age on force, what prevents the result from being a Pomack? He was physically strong, academically learned—
- RURIK: Bad heritage; both parents degenerates, one a thieving tramp.
- ZORA: Then, wasn't it moral health that lacked? His aim was aberrated. A noted man of science, financially successful,—yet morally, a moron; therefore, valueless to life-making, and worse!
- RURIK: Agreed. The more a moral defective is able to get hold of nature's energies the more deadly the menace of him. Still, scientific seeking must be kept clear of spiritual and moral entanglements. They are outside its province.
- ZORA: —But not outside the province of race-building! "Man does not live by bread alone" was true before Christ said it.
- RURIK: Your thought is in terms of religion, my dear. I gathered that during the fever.
- ZORA: No! Not religion.—Moral elements, yes!
- RURIK: Can you isolate, weigh, test, and ascertain the exact nature of such elements?
- ZORA: Let me ask: When your research men analyze an atom, find the ways of the electrons—

seem near the limits of physical investigation—you admit, don't you, that there is still something else, a factor still unknown—incalculable?

RURIK: True!

ZORA: Might not energy of different origin from the physical—that is, differently generated—be that unknown mover?

RURIK: We deal only with the physical aspects of Nature. Its wonders inspire us with faith that in going far enough we shall find inexorable laws binding humankind to a morality and justice sterner far than any that religion has ever yet dared to fix.

ZORA: Yes! A dull saying: —“There is no morality in Nature.” Wiser, the old fellow who saw that the “wages of sin is death” —sin, that ruins the brain-cells, diseases the tissues of the body, and kills the eternal life-cell!

RURIK: It seems plain duty to set about getting these laws recognized and into application all over the globe.

ZORA: What does your proposed method foresee as the ultimate result of evolution? (*Glances toward Report.*)

RURIK: We see a highly developed race. But, my dear, we do not venture to think in “ultimates.”

ZORA (*intense, almost in a whisper*): I do! I venture. I believe in a specific aim, a clearly indicated achievement—a goal.

RURIK: What practical value, in postulating some infinitely distant goal?

ZORA: Surely, an aim set up definitely, as the thing to be won, conditions the effort for its attainment?

RURIK: Doubtless.

ZORA: I want all that you want. With you I know that the time has been reached to go consciously forward with all our heaped-up power, organized for conscious, willed, intensive evolution.

RURIK: That conclusion is dawning in the minds of thinkers everywhere. Were it not so, all our plans and the most stupendous efforts would be doomed to failure.

ZORA: But you believe that to force men forward all along the line, using even terror, is enough, without showing them whither you would drive them?

RURIK: How else get them ahead?

ZORA: Show them the destination from the first! Lift up the aim before them. Only men with an aim,—an object of sacrificial devotion—have heart to work and will to endure.

RURIK: By what image show that aim? Do I, myself, know it? (*Her face lights up with a radiant thought—an intellectual smile.*) Who can tell how the human race may develop? Who can say what is in man?

ZORA: It is written in a book that one person “knew what is in man.” I believe he did, and told us just that!

RURIK: You mean——?

ZORA: Christ of Galilee. It seems to me as clear as day—that he told men the aim. He was the first teacher of human evolution.

RURIK: Now you enter the religious field——

ZORA: No-no! I leave it far—far! Religion is well;—all religions, in spite of their sins—as long as they lift up Christ to the world's view—feed the heart with a hope—that is greater, maybe, than they know!

RURIK: The world today wants more than symbols.

ZORA: If the Churches could wake up, see Christ as he is, *make him real*—they would get back with mountainous surge the vitality—ebbing away from outworn forms.

RURIK: But can they? Can they ever give up the alluring idea of making their so-called “Kingdom of God” a material, political theocracy?

ZORA: They would have to renounce that sweetest of all ecclesiastical sins—the attempt to give to Caesar what is God's——

RURIK: —Making themselves that Caesar! They cling to ceremonies and shrouds of the past like mouldy remains of ages dead.

ZORA: —As if they had no power of resurrection in them!

RURIK (*teasingly*): Tell me, in what church did your parents bring you up?

ZORA: In none at all! We were in the high mountains, far from churches—or any other people, (*smiling*) free as the air!

RURIK: Freedom beyond price for your stage-work.

ZORA: And that free study of character and personality shows everywhere a story—a thing told, in art or life—in everything, design, aim, purpose. Can the long, careful, upbuilding of the human individual—the apex—be the sole work of nature without aim?

RURIK: What aim, do you think?

ZORA: Might it not be—a self-creative purpose?—Unthinkable in its entirety; but to be applied familiarly as we use, say, electricity and other forces we cannot yet fathom?

RURIK: Even if true, there are no practical means of conveying such a conception to the mentally undeveloped.

ZORA: That's the question. Have we not a means?—a presentation as vivid as lightning against the sky?

RURIK: Where?

ZORA: In the personality of this very same Christ.

RURIK: Oh——!

ZORA: Studying that as one would a great new rôle; viewing this character clean of the comment of the ages, interpreting it as if for the first time, out of its own words and acts, what appears as clear as noonday is his announcement of the aim and purpose of human life, his statement to us of what we actually are, and may be!

RURIK: I confess I never felt it necessary to give much thought to religion.

ZORA: Don't accuse me!

RURIK: Accuse?

ZORA: The word "religion" swamps me in prejudice in your thoughts, I know it!

RURIK: But you cite the founder of a religion——

ZORA: Say rather of a "learning." He said, "Learn of me."

RURIK: Well, say on!

ZORA: Put the same old question regarding this personality as to any other great starter of ideas, from Aristotle to Darwin; from Alexander or Napoleon to George Washington; from Prometheus to Joan of Arc; Macbeth, Faust—"What does this character do in the piece?" What lights up the world in Christ's personality is his teaching of human evolution in principle and in practice.

RURIK: Evolution and Christ!

ZORA: First on earth he announced measureless potentiality in us—and that we are creatures in the course of development—being as yet, in understanding, but as "milk-fed infants." And he named the inexorable principle of development.

RURIK: —To be what?

ZORA: The one you men of science make your God—seeking in the sole spirit of truth. Have you any higher allegiance?

RURIK: Certainly not; research must be held untrammelled, free.

ZORA: He was the first to say "the truth makes free."

RURIK: Our freedom makes us mistrust dogma.

ZORA: —That's your integrity. I suppose every age learns by its own formula. —Every dogma has its day!

RURIK (*smiling*): I see!

ZORA: Aren't systems, after all, just evolutionary springboards for getting ahead?

RURIK: Yes—mechanisms of achievement. So must evolve with the race or petrify like layers of the earth's ages. I'm curious to know how you find your interpretation.

ZORA: When Peter offered to die and go with Christ, he got the answer, "Where I go, you cannot come now, but you will come hereafter"—"I am from above, you from beneath."

RURIK: —Meaning that Peter belonged to a different world——

ZORA: A different "age," the word is, literally translated. He also said that we must be born again into that "above" or "from" the "above," and unless a man is so reborn, he cannot enter the higher kingdom.

RURIK (*teasingly*): Meaning to die and go to heaven!

ZORA: Christ did not say so. He was clear on that point; stated that being born again referred to a spiritual development, and that, right here on this earth.

RURIK: What do you make of that?

ZORA: Could it not be entrance into a higher order of creation?—No longer the purely animal kingdom, nor the merely human order as we now are, but a new and advanced order—

higher kingdom, "the Kingdom of God," He called it.

RURIK: What is the Kingdom of God?

ZORA: The creative kingdom, surely! The activity of the being so evolved must evidently be creativeness—taking part in the creative function.

RURIK: You think we shall become creators?

ZORA: I think Christ taught that. Isn't that the only occupation that could everlastingly entertain us?—the only thing we really care for?

RURIK: It is true that men are always trying to make something.

ZORA: —From childhood up! By the very making of things—that necessity to make things—perhaps we are building ourselves up into the higher order—educating brain-cells to new life-power.

RURIK: In what sense?

ZORA: New faculty. "More abundant life," as Christ said.

RURIK: According to you, every maker of an object for use or for beauty would be the busy builder of man into——

ZORA: —Into the Christ-man, more and more prescient of relationship with an Almighty Maker.

RURIK: What is your conception of that One?

ZORA: The Knower of all potentialities; who is completely aware of us, in the most infinitesimal particle of each of us, soul and body. One whose spirit can only be the spirit of truth; The Supreme Desirer, from whom we come;

beyond the power of our present primitive brains to imagine. Yet, as an infant with its parent, we may confidently rely upon this unknown kinship. If we are to reach the vast measure of life latent in us, we must be "fellow-laborers" with this One who knows us from everlasting to everlasting, in working out the process by which we evolve into a higher order of creation.

RURIK: Where do you find warrant for such an interpretation?

ZORA: In plain, straight words, Christ taught that what He was, we are, potentially; that stored up in each one of us and capable of development, is a personality with powers similar to his own. The very heart of his teaching was, that the aim of our life on earth is emergence, evolution if you like—into that higher order which he represented; and that we can become, like himself, "children of God." He said, as recorded by all three evangelists: "They who do the will of God are my brothers, my sisters, and my mother."

RURIK: What do you conceive this—will of God to be?

ZORA: The full power of Christ for every human being.

RURIK: Why then, has the human race not known this earlier?

ZORA: Why not radio-telegraphy? and the rest—

RURIK: So you think the Christ-evolution idea was grain that ripened through the ages?

ZORA: —That means for its expression did. Doesn't your biology say that man's development lagged a million years, till the skull reached the stage where it was fully human, and since then in a few short thousands has leapt ahead? Only then, could a still higher order be foreseen. Soon after, came Christ, whose first recorded words to the world were: "The time is fulfilled; the kingdom of the highest is now at hand." What can that mean, if not that the stage has been reached when we may consciously win to a still higher order in nature?

RURIK: An interesting suggestion, certainly.

ZORA: He said, "If you cannot believe my words, then believe me for the very work's sake that you see me do." We are to believe that we have it in us to advance to this full measure of life—"full stature of life," as the Scripture has it; immortal because made up of what is deathless—of what goes on forever; modes of energy that are masters of form and formulation. Only as we grow like Christ in our thoughts and in our ways, can we begin to perceive him as he is, and to integrate the element that is eternal.

RURIK: Then your immortality is only for those who win it?

ZORA: His plea was, "Why will you die?" It is evidently vital for us at this stage, to begin to know about this new extension of being, this new birth through the understanding and the spirit; for he linked together the understanding and the spirit.— "As a man thinks, so he

is."—"My words to you are spirit and are life."
—"Life" was the great word with Christ. He
said, "I came that men might have life, more
abundant life"—vaster life.

RURIK: But, literally, concretely,—how did he bestow that vast life?

ZORA: By warning us away from what hinders or destroys our chances of fulfilment; and showing the means to the life of power.

RURIK: You think the race would not have found its own way?

ZORA: With ages, maybe, through great sorrows and waste. Only if one who knew these things—one, belonging to a higher order than ours—could come to us, when we were able to hear—and tell us in our language—give us, not rules nor arbitrary commands, but principles of development—and by a life lived among us, plant within the race indelibly, the immortal conception—only so, could the populations of the earth have the means of secure and swift advance.

RURIK: You think Christ deliberately derogated?

ZORA: Even Napoleon saw that Christ belonged to a higher kind than ours. I do imagine that he stepped back and down to our present human stage—as recorded. "He took our flesh upon him"—for the purpose of making known to us these saving truths. Controller of energy in every form, doubtless, he said of the body: "I have power to take it up, and power to lay it down again."

RURIK: An awful thought—that of a free and pure being, entering the bonds of a lower order!

ZORA: Great-hearted men and women step down among the degraded, become even lepers, in order to help them.

RURIK: Yes, the task of saving life and lifting it up is, perhaps, the master passion.

ZORA: Therefore, the higher the type, the more intense that passion. What fearful risk Christ must have taken in subjecting himself to embodiment in the mortal, human frame, insufficiently evolved, hardly yet adaptable for high spiritual use and transmutation; a body which even at the best, must bear the heritage of the very ignorance, sin, and suffering he came to help abolish.

RURIK: Torment unthinkable to such a one!

ZORA: —Comparable to what one of us would experience could we deliberately take birth in a cave man's body, and were we actually to do so. Imagine, trying to form our thoughts and express them through his undeveloped mechanism!—Striving by simple tales or symbols out of his own surroundings to make the lower man understand ideas belonging to our stage of development, impress him with lofty intellectual and spiritual conceptions; teach him theories and control of energy, electricity, radio, chemical energy,—or the structure of the atom!

RURIK: All black magic to our cave man! He would be in terror of one with such mysterious

powers, would club him to death,—probably tear him to pieces and eat him!

ZORA: The sad burden of bearing our inherited sins in his body, may explain why Christ found it necessary to pray.

RURIK: Ah, yes, that unavailing supplication in the garden to be spared the final agony—a cry unheard by the God he trusted, and who forsook him! The acme of human tragedy, surely! Otherwise, 'tis not, I imagine, a figure seen in prayer, which that name mainly evokes.

ZORA: He did pray, though, habitually; urged constant prayer; gave a prayer—directive, invoking, first, the coming Higher Order—"on earth," the achievement of the Father's purpose—"on earth," and the conditions for that achievement.

RURIK: Training the unformed mind to visualize——

ZORA: There may be more in it.—He, the sublimest character ever seen, spent whole nights on the hillsides and in the deserts in solitary prayer.

RURIK: Strange necessity!—If he could, really, heal the lepers and raise the dead!

ZORA: After such nights of prayer, it is recorded, "power came forth from him." As if the magnetic coil of human life were recharged. He was evidently better able to control the energy in nature—"work the forces" is the literal translation, badly rendered by the word "miracles."

RURIK: Still, it is odd he should require such means——

ZORA: Doesn't it behoove us to take notice when such a personality does find power through prayer? Without that earth-means of contact with the mind that knows all things, the very knowledge of himself which he came to impart might have lapsed. He might have forgotten his mastery over Nature, become unable to win back at a single step, up out of our early wavering stage, to the vast life he had left; might have lost the power to rise from the dead.

RURIK: —If he ever possessed that power!

ZORA: Could not a master of energy play back and forth with its mutable forms?

RURIK: Mh—m — theoretically — perhaps——

ZORA: By some electromagnetic means controlled within himself, might not such a master scatter the rapidly disbanding chemical energies of the lifeless body back, each unto its own?

RURIK: But why?—What use in that?

ZORA: For the lesson. Then, too, had the body remained, foolish men would have worshiped it.

RURIK: Yes, idolatry is still with us!

ZORA: If he had left writings in his own hand, men would have turned them into "Abracadabra."

RURIK: Then, you don't believe he appeared to his disciples after the entombment?

ZORA: I can easily believe that he did appear to the persons he was teaching. Probably; so he made known to human eyes a finer, ethereal frame possessed in embryo by us all and which we are to perfect with growth in understand-

ing into an all-powerful organ of fully conscious, endless life.

RURIK: For the race only,—not individuals——

ZORA: —For every human being.

RURIK: So! You too, have to come down to magic!

ZORA: Horror! Not at all!—There must be renewed chances—chances to profit by experience, somehow, possibly re-birth into the present, lower order——

RURIK: Reincarnation!

ZORA: Doesn't your modern discovery of a positive and negative pole in even the lowliest living organism give new idea to that age-old notion? — a belief held by the early Christians! Mightn't some electromagnetic action involve the re-embodiment of a highly organized and complex unit of life-energy?—self-conscious, self-willed?

RURIK (*slightly smiling*): In such event, tell me, is it your idea that the persisting life-energy of the individual could ever be bodiless or remain so, during a stage between death and rebirth.

ZORA: Oh no!—not bodiless——

RURIK: Ah! I'm glad your fancy doesn't run counter to results of observations which show that *where there is energy, there is always form—form, organized and being organized.*

ZORA: My guess is, that our mind, subconsciously, is always shaping and re-shaping some unseen means of the spirit, integrating its perceptive and conceptive gains from experience—maybe its losses too—so constituting a form from

which life is never separated, whether in the earth-flesh or out of it. This finer body, always with us, but as invisible as the ultra-violet rays to the eyes we now possess, may be the "everlasting storehouse" spoken of by Christ.

RURIK: You postulate an organism of rarefied matter?

ZORA: Possibly; at least some organ of uninterrupted life-consciousness.

RURIK: Then, death would be merely a condition of the present inferior order?

ZORA: I do imagine that as long as we remain in this lower state, we, like the species below man, are still subject solely to mechanistic fiat, including decay and death of the body. Death might be a device in the scheme.

RURIK: Biologists have, in fact, come to recognize the utility, if not necessity, of death as part of Nature's process of advance.

ZORA: Then, wouldn't there seem to be also, an economic value in the repeated rebirth of the increasingly conscious individual into this planet, until its use is exhausted?

RURIK: What risk—to be drawn back again and again into conditions such as we have! What was won might be lost!

ZORA: Ah!—"there's the rub!" Whatever is to be ours, the whole race must earn. There can be no safety for any, until civilization gives every child born a sound body with means of wholesome life and advance!

RURIK: Just our proposal; until then, to be born is perilous.

ZORA: Let no man dare even to die—with things as they are! As long as there is monstrosity and bad brain function, how can we be sure that a nobly developed spirit might not be caught at birth in the toils of a physically deficient frame, and have to suffer its chains in struggling ahead?

RURIK: We do, indeed, see this very thing; Poor Samuel Johnson's case—and many more as notable.

ZORA: Our most innocent and best have to bear the sins of the world in their bodies. It may be a law that in this lower order they are bound to suffer and strive until all ranks are brought abreast.

RURIK: That interprets literally and with a vengeance the dictum that what we do to others we do to ourselves!

ZORA: Perhaps escape from the sorrow of this comes only when the individual awakes to the limitless power within, lays hold of its work and purpose, and so actually begins to enter the higher condition.

RURIK: By a metaphysical conception?

ZORA: No. By living life according to Christ's interpretation, in the spirit of love—getting the best for the other fellow as well as for one's self—and truth-seeking, pressing ahead to all knowledge. Such mastery of energy may be attained that the very chemical elements of the body may become subject to man and transmutable

at will. Man, too, may acquire "the power to lay the body down or take it up."

RURIK: Then, you don't consider physical nature as evil in battle with the spiritual?

ZORA: No; except as an overflowing river ravaging the plains is evil. The water controlled, can make the plains a paradise.

RURIK: You think evil is life-energy gone astray!

ZORA (*nods "yes"*): Surely; the true reading must include the virtue of physical nature.—Even a majestic purpose for material existence.

RURIK: Your theory rejects the sin of the world which the preachers thunder about——

ZORA: Not at all! Christ's word for "world" in that sense, literally translated, is "age" or "epoch." What hinders development must be evil.

RURIK: Your criminal, I agree, is the person or power that puts men back in body or mind.

ZORA: So, when Christ said, "Sin against the spirit of truth is the one and only sin that cannot be pardoned, either in this age or in ages to come," he spoke no opinion or arbitrary command, but a self-evident fact.

RURIK: As if one said, "destroying destroys"!

ZORA: Obviously, the one final sin, the fatal act, the measure of all evil, must be whatever hinders evolution!—obstructs the creative process.

RURIK: In simple self-defense, then, we must set about perfecting the race intensively!

ZORA: Working out the whole human design——

RURIK: Assuming that there is such a design!

ZORA: I think Christ spoke of that design when he said, "I came to fulfil"—"I am the way, the truth, the life." Paul said, "There is a new creature." Tell me, in very fact, would not such an emergence into a higher type of creature, with new reactions to environment, constitute, biologically, an evolutionary effect?

RURIK: In the intellectual and spiritual realm, perhaps.

ZORA: *But may not evolution itself, all the way up, be the subjection and use of energy by the creative mind or spirit?*

RURIK: In a sense it is. This is what you wanted to say to me?

ZORA: This is what I pray God you may see: the aim!—And its practical value to your great undertaking. (*He bends his head in silence. She cannot judge of his response.*)

(*With low, then mounting passion to the end of her argument*) If you could see this—the Christ type of personality to be developed in each individual, as the purpose of human evolution—O Theodor, you would see God. For you could! You would contain creative life, God's fire. Christ showed that we can come into actual touch—mental radio touch with that Designer of the evolution of the human race!

RURIK: And your Christ is the divine son of this father?

ZORA: To my mind, he was the first being seen on earth belonging to the high order which we are now able to visualize and begin to enter.

RURIK: Do you call him divine?

ZORA: Do we know what "divine" is? Was Christ not the true first son of the Highest among us? As the first, having complete knowledge and control of Nature's energy, and faultless knowledge of human nature? The first perfect embodiment of truth in every relation,—of helpfulness,—love,—suffering to the uttermost for the highest?—God's presence fills him before our eyes! (*He remains silent.*)

ZORA: Has this no meaning for you?

RURIK: I have not hitherto considered any such basis for the plans we are engaged on.

ZORA: Suppose all men and women could come to believe that they have within themselves the capacity to overcome all deficiency, reach understanding of creative principles—all that Christ was, in fact, and more than he was then able to teach us, as he said, because of our infantile mentality. For men to realize that in this capacity lies their equality before God—and in no other way can there be equality or justice! For them to know that they are part of a whole in which this developing process is the purpose of life on earth; would not the expression, "human brotherhood," no longer a mere catch-vote and demagogic standby, be seen as grim reality, a matter of life and death for one and all? Would not compassion appear, and envy—that arch-destroyer—be down in the dust at last—with the knowledge that, stored up in each, is the power to achieve whatever the mind can picture—"more than

eye has ever seen, or ear heard, more than has ever entered into the heart of man to imagine!"—Christ's own words!

And you, Theo! Your work—what is it anyway but co-operation with the great Evolver?—no mere nucleus of the universal atom, but a living Heart of Understanding, rejoicing in the perfection of forms for life's enrichment— One we can only know in part until we grow up with the ages, but an actual Presence which even children take into confidence, and with whom men of sublimest intelligence commune in much the same way. It stands to reason that most of all is this great Heart of the universe interested in the works your own soul cries out for. Therefore, interested in you, Theo, interested with a passion as far beyond the measure of your own desire as universal creation itself surpasses the limits of our small planet.

RURIK: It comes to me as I listen to you, that I have never said any prayers since the days when my mother used to come to my little cot in the nursery and hear me say them.

ZORA: Maybe that's why what I say sounds so far distant to you!

RURIK: My objects of study have been remote from yours. What mechanics of achievement are you thinking of?

ZORA: Don't brain-cells have to be trained—whether for peering into secrets of the atom, or for the quest of Holy Grails?

RURIK (*dreamily*): Doubtless. All attainment is through the doors of learning.

ZORA: So then, "Education!" is the watchword. But education sent forth to conquer—with financing as if for war, and scope of organization never dreamed of before;—to show why life must be made good for all—to be good for any. It must be brought home that the sickly body and the miseries you see the other one struggling with, may soon be your own lot. As long as such things are, you, yourself, with godlike longings, can be caught at birth in crushing circumstances, chained like a convict to a defective body and brain-mechanism, unable to put your ideas into working form, condemned to so poor a machine that genius itself could only turn out failures—or crimes with it.

RURIK: The ordinary man might despair.

ZORA: Mankind must be shown the principle providing for conscious, organized conquest of a never-ending life of power; and that its law, like the forms of energy, physical and moral, to which it applies, is part of the raw stuff of Nature—for us to use. To use—but how?—and for what? Let them look at the teaching, the acts, the personality of Christ, to see if he is not the illustration of that aim—that consummation, showing us the Creative Order in the working. He alone has given a meaning to human evolution. Only this, as I view the world, can ever absorb away out of the human heart its myriad murderous poisons. I'd die for this, if dying could win it!

RURIK: I can see that Christ could become very real if looked at in that light. He never seemed quite real to me before.

ZORA: Because you let the churches monopolize him, and they often take pains to make him unreal; sometimes cover him with zigzags that make him invisible. Yet, he is nearer than ever. And in our age, it is just you men of science who have brought him nearer—at least, you've brought humankind nearer him—right up to him!

RURIK: There may some truth there——

ZORA: Let science, now, as a world-builder, show if it can better what the others have done!

RURIK: That's our intention.

ZORA: But science too, will need to broaden its horizons; cease from being—"The spirit that denies"!

RURIK: In scorn of the unproven, we may sometimes deny too far.

ZORA: Isn't that pride and self-arrogation of privileged vision of truth as bad a blind as superstition? Mightn't it shut your eyes to the meaning of supreme personality?

RURIK: You refer to the conception that sees individuality disappear with ultimate advance; does not admit personality in the highest——

ZORA: For such, Christ came in vain! He, the sublimest character known; yet, more than all others that ever lived, possessing the most definite personality and individuality. He was, too, the most natural and real person of all,

so that little children came and climbed up into his arms.

RURIK: So far I admit your point; the greater men are, the richer are they in personality and individual will.

ZORA: God will probably turn out to be the most natural thing in the universe! The notion of perfection as the extinction of personality, equal to non-being in fact, seems a purely finite idea, of a piece with the concept of the Maker as non-active, non-sentient. Christ said, "The Father works and I work," and "The spirit makes intercession for you with groans that cannot be uttered"—almost as if God prayed to us, as a father pleads with his children.

There is then, a work to do: for him,—for us!—something striving for fulfilment. Is this thing not personality in the highest, groaning to come to pass in each individual?

RURIK: The ultimate human conception is always a sublime paradox.

ZORA: But the question is a practical one: Could this belief in Christ as a living embodiment of the evolutionary purpose—resident in every human being—take the race ahead?

RURIK: I admit that were Christ universally recognized, objectively and subjectively, to be what he seems to you, the evolutionary teacher, leader, and first example of a higher order, which we are able to enter here, which perhaps, we must enter here, and the entrance to which lies in our own control, that conception

would certainly govern the character of all education, the mutual attitude of individuals toward one another, and the whole further development of civilization. There is a certain thrill in the idea.

ZORA: Could not the making of your new earth be along this way, rather than solely under the shadow of force and terror?

RURIK: I grant you've somewhat shaken my cocksureness—generated doubt in my mind——

ZORA: Then?

RURIK: It's a majestic conception.

ZORA: Unscientific?

RURIK: Not entirely——

ZORA: —A bad working hypothesis?

RURIK: No—not bad (*deeply musing*). —By George—it would be odd if you had hit upon the truth! It would mean for my layout——

ZORA: Revision?

RURIK: Complete!

ZORA: But also, success, realization——

RURIK: I wish I knew! I am assailed by doubts.

[*A short pause. He gets up, fingers the Report on the table, picks it up, turns the leaves, lays it down again. In doing this, a written page of letter paper flutters out to the floor. He takes it up and begins to read, the first sentence, clearly to her, then haltingly, turning away, merely muttering.*]

RURIK (*reads*): "Tonight three ships enter New York harbor. If my test succeeds, one of them is a ship of death from Captain to hold——"
(*He stifles a cry of horror and collapses into*

seat by which he was standing—barely able to control emotion that shatters him as if by a bolt of lightning.)

ZORA: What is it?—I didn't hear the last part—Who wrote it?

RURIK: Don't ask me—Pomack. —How dark the room is!

ZORA: There's a chill in the air——

RURIK (*starting from his painful mood and rushing to shut the window*): I had completely forgotten.—It was madness to let you stay here like this!

[*He has hardly reached the window when she droops forward and tumbles in a soft heap to the floor in front of her chair. Stopped by the sound, he turns to fly back, and lifts her up on the sofa, then hurries into room adjoining bedroom, re-entering with maid, half-asleep, and gathering about her a large wrap. He has the maid by the arm and directs her to the antechamber door. She looks at Zora scared, as she exits, he saying.*]

RURIK: Try the hotel first!

[*He returns to Zora, kneels, listens at her heart, chafes her hands with eau-de-cologne—tries to revive her, anxiously murmuring and panting. The room darkens. He is awestruck.*]

RURIK: —How low the candles burn!—Life burns low like the candles.—How strange the place is! The very chemistry of existence seems changed. The world is empty. I was not alone before you came—but now—I am alone forevermore! (*In despair he begins awkwardly*

to pray spasmodically, trying to revive her. Then—) God Almighty—save her!—O Christ, come to her! I have never known you—never sought you—you have never been real to me.—But I will try.—Let my words find you—wherever you are! If you really exist—come here—set this heart beating again! (Listens at her heart, then continues more desperately. Standing.)

God! Creator!—If you exist—and see hearts, you know that the thirst of my blood is to help—that our people here on earth may not remain in horrible degradation. I will give every possession for that—life, itself, if need be. If I am on the wrong track—take me off it! She offered her life just now—for me—perhaps—I didn't understand. —But, oh—don't take that life—Maker of her—of me—I ask—I ask—Don't take my Angel from me!

[A dazzling white light appears, slightly prismatic, in a shaft from floor to ceiling where the candleabra stands, swallowing it up in suave, poetic radiance.]

RURIK: The room is full of light! Am I going blind? —There's a Presence here! Wait! —Have mercy!

[Slowly sinks to his knees as if spellbound. A voice speaks from the light, the voice of a man, meltingly sweet but poised—entirely natural and human.]

VOICE: Theodor Rurik!

RURIK (*strains forward and listens like one in a trance*): —My name!—I have never heard

that voice before—but I know it!—Have always known it! Love divine!—Unknown—Unimaginable! (*Maintaining his position of wrapt wonder, he speaks as if repeating words spoken to him*):

I hear you! “Go to those on the wrong track—losing their way—show them who and what they are.” Yes—I hear! “Many have reached the stage where they can begin to understand—prepare for the germ of endless life in them to awaken, become actual. Others, in vast numbers, wander still vaguely, law-sheltered, law-bound. Others, still farther back on the road, rage against those who strive to help them, and kill those who would bring them saving knowledge.”

“All these wound and slay themselves again and again—stubbornly remaining in the ages where death is,—till time has had its will of them.” —Yes—I hear! —“We must hasten to those in despair through doubt—adolescent souls on the threshold of true life. We must show them the glory and power waiting to be won by them. We are to go to the ones in the dim, treacherous ways of half-learning,—who cry out that they have lost their God forevermore. They will be shown even by the workings of physical nature—the Maker’s powerhouse—the place of Christ in the series—His place and their place. The age has come when this recognition can begin,—the method: unity of aim, variety of effort—” —Ah, yes, for life is multiform. “*The first principle of spiritual evolution is: individual responsibility.*”

[Rurik covers his face with his hands an instant, his manner of speech during the rest showing that he is speaking his own words. At first in low agony.]

RURIK: I accept!—But, oh, the walls of woe between!—because of the poor, insensate minds still bound fast in the sleep of primitive time! Bitter task!—What if it throw down in me past ages of conquest—overflow me with all the tides of failure and forsakenness that have been on earth since mortal man began to strive!

O, Crucified One!—Tears and sweat of blood in the Garden—In that anguish you were perfected—O, Elder Brother, I too—I give myself!—

[The great light fades, all becomes normal. Rurik regains his natural self, but is full of a new power, as if supercharged with a magnetic fire of life, as Christ was after his night “spent on the mountain alone in prayer.” —He stands a moment looking down at Zora.]

RURIK: What if I try! *(Taking her hands, he cries out with all his might and passion of will and command)*— Zora!— Live!!—

[She comes to consciousness as if from a faint, slowly reviving.]

ZORA *(dreamily)*: —Theo! —I had a wondrous dream—a dream of light!

RURIK *(low)*: —Love immortal!

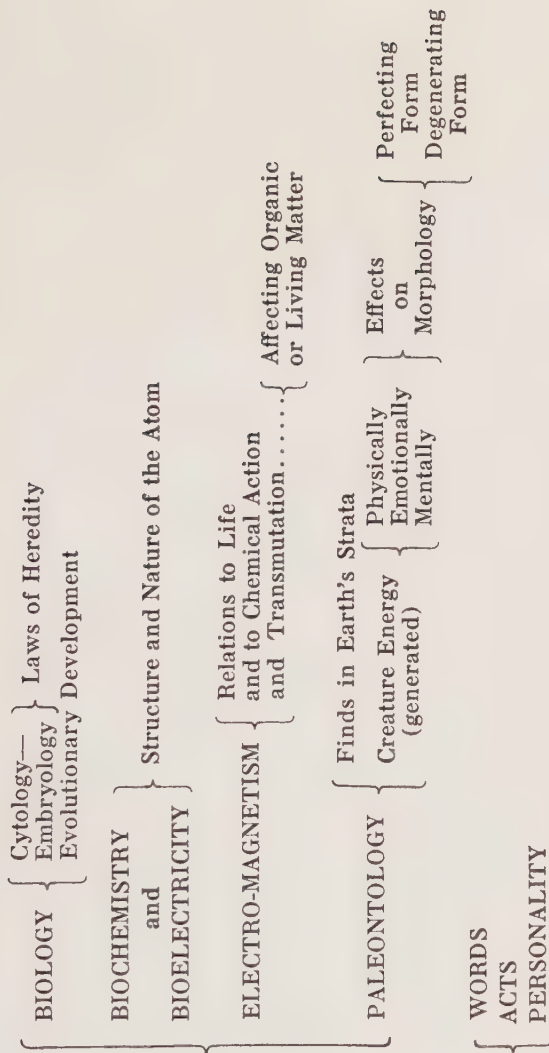
ZORA: Life! —Sweet life!

[Dawn through the window and some stringed happy music from a distant boat.]

BEARINGS OF SCIENTIFIC DISCOVERY ON THE INTERPRETATION OF CHRIST

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